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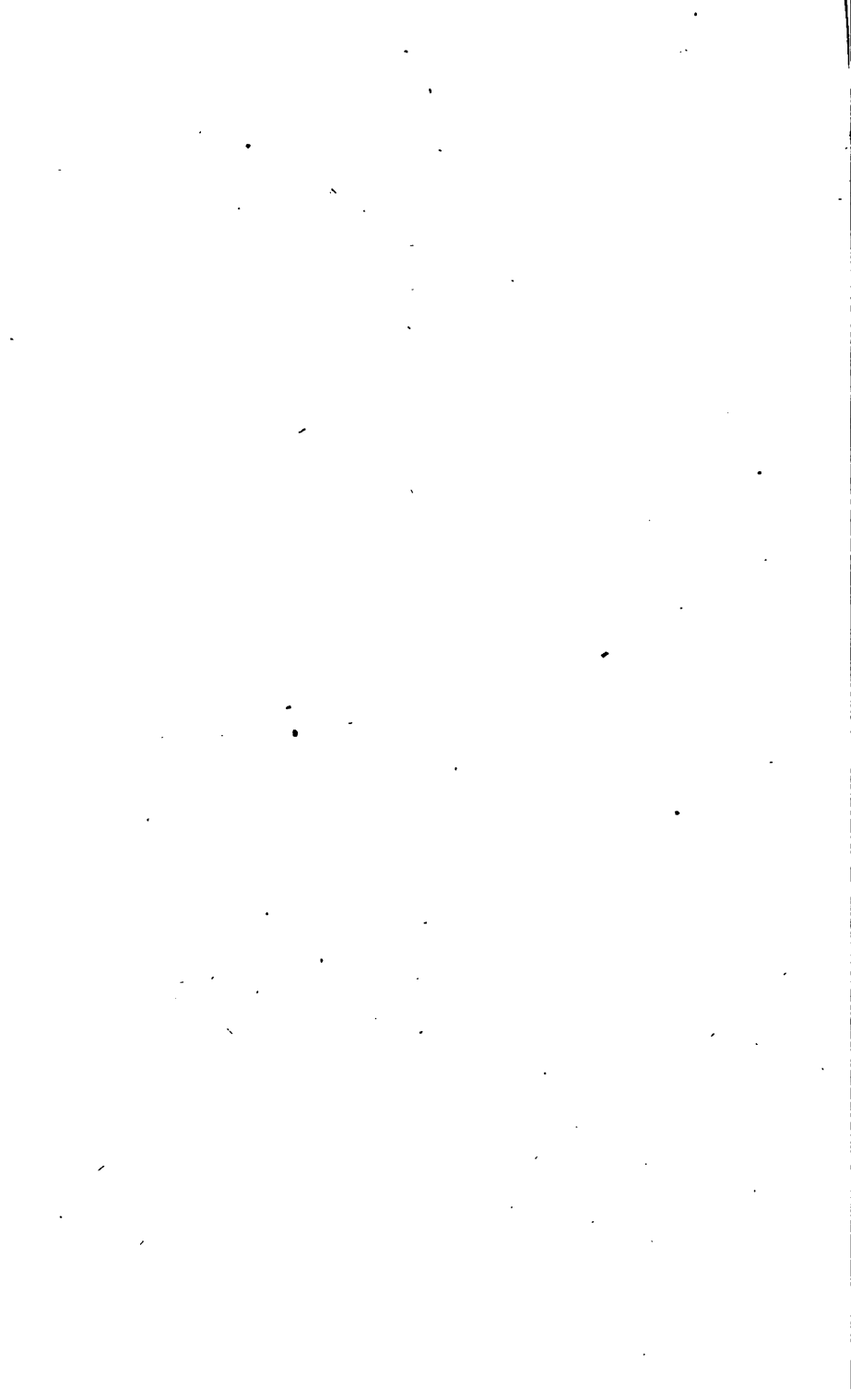
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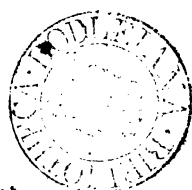
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VOL. III.

LONDON.

HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,

GREAT BRITISH STREET.

1843.



THE STAGE COACH;

OR,

THE ROAD OF LIFE.

BY

JOHN MILLS, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF "THE OLD ENGLISH GENTLEMAN."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



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THE STAGE COACH,

OR

THE ROAD OF LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

THE CLANDESTINE LOVERS ; OR, THE JACK O' LANTERN.

The succeeding club-night, a little dapper-looking man was sitting next to Jacob Plywel, who, although a constant frequenter of the hebdomadary meetings, has been lost sight of hitherto in the chronicles of its sayings and doings. The neglect has been occasioned by this member not having been called upon for an active part in the proceedings, save the full share of drainage from the bowls and bot-

bles, and the hearty addition of his laugh to the general roar. As, however, he is now about "to fret his brief hour on the stage," here is "the creature, ere he finds a tongue."

Peter Bivin was one of the *has-beens*,—a qualification without which no one could be a successful candidate for admission to "the chalked-off coachman's free and easy." But, although he was of the past, still, as "from leaves that are scatter'd, an odour is flung—more sweet when the flower is withered and dead," so there was something in Peter's remains, which enhanced, perhaps, the attractions of his decline.

Although of the short order, his body was unusually long, Nature having curtailed the fairest of his proportions in a pair of legs yclept "bandy," and devoid, or as nearly so as possible, of their usual attendants, the thighs. His countenance was round and chubby, without a trace of anger, thought, or care in it; and, although the effects of more than fifty win-

ters were visible in the thin and straggling hairs, frosted here and there upon his brow, he had, in other respects, the appearance of a much younger man. In two straight lines down the centre of his cheeks, carved with the nicest precision, a pair of crisp whiskers grew short and thick as a box-hedge border. A blue cravat, spotted with white, twisted round his throat with curious turns and a fantastic tie, exposed the bleached front and nicely crimped frill of a well starched shirt—that is to say, the *proxy* of a shirt ; for Peter Bivin's was a *curtailed dicky*. Not a button of his long-waisted bright claret cutaway, not a thread of which it was composed, but looked the property of one who studied fashion to adorn his person. True it is, that more than one of those buttons peeped from the edge of its covering, and looked ready to start from its socket. True it is, that countless threads were bared of their once soft glossy nap, and looked in that intermediate state between

going to rags and gone. Yet there was an air about the ruin, which told of the care and taste displayed in its pristine days of youth and beauty, and even the visible darns in the well-rubbed collar proclaimed how dearly-prized the old coat still was.

Few men, perhaps, had had more numerous admirers than Peter Bivin; the gay, the young, the smart, the handsome dragsman of the Leicester Blue. There was not a town or even a village that he rattled his merry team through, but smiles and wafted kisses were given to him with profusion. Dimpled chins, rosy cheeks, and eyes brighter than the polished buckles of the harness sparkling in the sun, were visible at all points, when the well-known rattle of his wheels was heard. Young and old welcomed the approach of "Mr. Bivin," as he was generally called, and even the little children ran and "whooped" at his side, and clapped their hands, and laughed as he flanked his cracking thong at them.

Time and the railroad, however, had effected a sad alteration in Peter's sublunary position. His occupation, admirers, money, credit, and almost his wardrobe, were gone. What remained of the latter was upon his back, except, indeed, the shades of the remainder within the ample pockets of his only waistcoat, in substance, form, and shape of a few pawnbrokers' tickets.

Pride still lingered in the faded Peter, nevertheless. Not one in the club took more care to set off his poor habiliments to the best advantage than he did, and as it was an unalterable rule with him never to be seen in public until the drowsy beetle had sought the twilight, the wear and tear escaped malicious observation, and still enabled him to bear his head aloft among his boon companions.

"I say, Dick Wirkem," observed Jacob Plywel, "I have the right, I believe, to make the call."

"You have," briefly replied the President,

stirring up his glass, and nodding to his friend opposite.

"Then I shall have a fresh nag," rejoined Jacob; "my right-hand chum here can give us something to make the hours slide easy, I know."

"What! Peter Bivin!" exclaimed the old coachman.

"Ah!" continued he, "not a man in this company nor any other more capable, I know."

"He's a down pin, though," whispered John Hogg to his friend Toddy.

"Eh?" said the ex-postboy.

"A swell out of luck," returned Jack, pettishly; "can't ye hear without a feller roarin?"

"I've told many a tale on the road," observed Peter, "but I never tried one off the box."

"That's no reason you should never attempt it," replied Jacob Plywel.

"To be sure not," added Mr. Wirkem. "Peter," continued he, raising his glass, "here's your health, my lad."

“Thank ye, Dick,” returned Peter; and, after a short pause for the refreshing of his ideas, he began the following story.

When I was about twenty-one years old, (said he,) I think, if my memory serves me right, I had no less than nine regular courting-matches going on all at the same time in the same town—that of Leicester. I can’t tell how or why it was, (continued Peter, slightly glancing at the bosom of his dicky,) but if I wouldn’t fall on my own hook in love with a girl, she’d drag me on to it willy-nilly, and *insist* upon my being in love with her. There was no escape for me; into the pickle I was forced to souse; and, therefore, whenever proceedings of this sort were commenced against me, I usen’t even to struggle for escape, but threw myself on my back, as it were, and submitted to circumstances.

“Heaven and earth!” exclaimed Mr. Wirkem, “what a position for a Christian!”

Bad enough, (returned Peter,) but such was mine at the time I'm now referring to. As to any quiet — I had none. It was pull, Sally; pull, Polly; and such a rumpus continually going on, that there was no peace from morning till night.

At last, in order to settle the disturbance, I determined to marry; and so, by adopting one evil, to get rid of half a score.

Among the candidates for my hand and heart was a little milliner, whose name was Nancy Spicer, and a very pretty girl she was. She had a nice, full, plump mould, carried her head well, and had such a pair of soft blue eyes that always put you in mind of your prayers, even when they were laughing. Indeed, I've thought that they put me more in mind of heaven, then, than at any other time. And then her lips! (continued Peter,) no man who had ever kissed them would forget *that* sensation.

“Come, come,” interrupted Mr. Wirkem,

in a tone of expostulation, and re-arranging himself in his chair. "Don't, Peter; pray don't put such coltish notions into one's head!"

I only stick to facts, (replied Peter.)

"Pardon the interruption," rejoined the President. "Go on, my pink of dragsmen," continued he.

After a great deal of deliberation, (resumed Peter,) I determined to make choice of this same Nancy Spicer out of the team, to run as a match-pair with me. No sooner was this determination known to the others, and scarcely were the words popped out of my mouth that sealed my fate, than every one became acquainted with them, and I became worse off than any baited badger. Instead of getting rid of the tormentors, I was watched at every turn, nook, and corner, and saluted with—"Ah, you base deceiver! hypocrite, perjurer!" and such like pleasant epithets, till at last I was the town-talk; and,

as evil reports always find more favour with the public than those of an opposite description, I was considered a scamp and a condemned deceiver. Anonymous letters were sent to Nancy, threatening her with all sorts of scratching visitations, and, whenever we walked out together, hisses and groans announced the unpopularity of our love-making.

Such was the persecution at last, that we resolved to take secret opportunities of exchanging those tender sentiments and fond endearments so universally adopted in such cases, from the pale-faced European to the swarthy Hottentot. Instead of parading the open street in the glaring daylight, we imitated the discordant mousers who scream their love-tales in night's murky darkness, and breathed our whispered vows at sunset in secret places. Under the shadow of some sympathizing pump, post, or wall, we conjured up imaginations of future bliss. Sometimes the friendly shade of a wide-spreading

tree, stretching its limbs on the outskirts of the town, afforded us space for the like purpose. But even in these selected spots we were occasionally startled from our reveries of delight by "Ha! I'm looking at ye, Peter Bivin;" or some such announcement from our persecutors.

One dark evening, early in spring, that Nancy and I had been taking one of our stolen walks on the outside of the town, and talking about our union, which was to take place early in the ensuing week, when I saw a light glimmer through the hedge, just budding into leaf, as if somebody was carrying a lantern on the other side. Nancy saw it at the same moment, and exclaimed in a suppressed voice, "Look—somebody is watching us, Peter."

"I think there is," replied I; "and as it's such marshy ground, it can't be a woman. She'd stick fast by the way in a dozen steps."

"No matter who it is," rejoined Nancy.

"Let us hasten homewards. I fear mischief is at hand."

"And if it be," returned I, "let it come. I'll stand this game no longer. So here goes," continued I, gathering myself for a spring over the hedge.

"Stop, Peter, stop," said Nancy. "I'm dying with fright. Pray do not leave me."

Just at this moment the light flashed for a moment within five or six yards of us, and, without waiting for any more objections from Nancy, I crashed through the hedge, and rushed forward to grasp the dodger, as I thought him, of our footsteps. The light was almost under my nose, and flickered within a few inches of my feet, when, as I stretched forth a hand to clutch the form that held it, away he skipped some twenty paces from me.

Neither tread nor footfall could I hear, and still there the light was held again, stationary and flaring, as if in mockery of my attempt to discover the intruder.

Angry at the escape, and more so at the apparent derision, I again bounded towards it at my best pace, with teeth and fists clenched, ready for mischief; but the vexing devil glided from me, and held the distance gained, notwithstanding my best endeavours to reach him.

After running some two or three hundred yards, with a determination of overtaking my enemy, I in a moment lost sight of him, and directly afterwards caught a glimpse of his lantern in an adjacent common or heath. Nothing daunted, away I went after him, sweeping through furze, bush, and briar, splashing through pools of mud and water, losing now and then a fragment of my dress, and wincing again, as the thorns buried their points in my flesh.

Occasionally I thought I heard a "Ha, ha!" as I followed through waste and mire, and the jeering laugh made me more resolved than ever to pursue the chace at all risks and

hazards. On we went, acre after acre, and miles were tracked, and still I followed on.

At last it was clear that I was beating my opponent. Yard after yard I gained upon him; and as the fleet gazehound strains his sinews to pick up his victim, as he sees the certainty of success within a few more strides, so did I put forth my remaining strength, and, with the speed of an antelope, shot forwards to seize my prize. One more struggle and he was mine. I put out my hands to catch the object of my hot pursuit, when into a deep, thick, miry pool I flounced up to my shoulders, sinking to my hips into the yielding mud at the bottom.

“ Help! help!” cried I. “ I’m a drowning man. Help! help!”

“ Ha, ha, ha!” laughed somebody. “ Ha, ha, ha!”

“ For God’s sake, help me!” returned I, feeling that I could not stir from my fixed position; but all I heard was the laugh, and

the moan of the night-wind as it swept along. Still, I was certain that somebody was near; for not only the jeering sound proved such to be the case, but the light was waved to and fro on the verge of the pool, now flitting here, then dancing there, as if in merriment at my suffering.

The night was now becoming momentarily blacker. Large, heavy clouds flew before the gale, accompanied by a cold, biting sleet. In fitful gusts the wind went and came, but each succeeding one was of increasing force. A pale, glimmering star peered occasionally from between the masses of scudding clouds, and peeped like the ray of hope from accumulated sorrow.

Struggling to free myself from the chilly immersion, I at last drew one leg from the cloying mire and then the other, and, throwing myself forwards, grasped a long barbed bramble growing on the edge. Careless of the rents torn in my hands and fingers, I kept

fast hold of the prickly briar and drew myself by its means towards the shore. One foot was on the bank, and the other was being dragged to its side, when the root yielded, and backwards I fell into the water, with a "Ha, ha, ha!" wringing in my ears.

Scrambling once more upon my legs, after several ineffectual attempts to rise, and getting more water into my jaws than would have satisfied a teetotaller for a twelvemonth, I again pointed for the shore, and gained it much in the plight of a cat having escaped from the sack in which she was intended to be drowned.

Shaking the mud from my feet, and stroking the water from my saturated head, I cast my eyes round for the whereabouts of my enemy. Yes, there he stood with his lamp burning brighter than ever, not thirty paces from me. I fancied even that I could hear him chuckling at my misfortunes. It was too much for common patience to bear. Desperation spur-

red me on, and, with an oath, now recorded against me in that huge volume, the sins of man, I once more started in the race.

Like a meteor in the summer sky, my enemy streaked away at the same moment. Over moor and mead, hill and valley, we rushed along, with nothing to guide me in the pursuit but the same thin, wavering flame, now apparently stationary, and then gliding off until it became but a mere spark, as faint as the glowworm's lamp at the break of day.

Hours flew by and still the chace continued. The watch-dog's bark broke on the ear in the stilly night, and the tinkle of the sheep-bell; but, saving these familiar sounds, nothing else was heard in that breathless run — all was silent, dark, and deserted. The wind now roared and whistled as he passed, and the clouds flew in broken masses before the gale, permitting the stars to glimmer occasionally between them, and throw an uncertain light upon the earth. The sleet fell thicker, driving

into my face, and all was lonely wretchedness; but still I followed on. In the lulls of the storm I heard the "Ha, ha, ha!" and if my wearied limbs staggered, and my resolution began to waver, these sounds nerved both, and with increased vigour I braced my flagging spirits.

At length, after splashing through some lowlands, flooded nearly to my knees, with but here and there a dry spot from its elevation, I felt exhaustion seize upon me, and, with a breathless groan, I soon afterwards fell upon a soft, spongy piece of greensward.

Resting on my hands, I raised myself to watch the movements of my opponent, and, to my great astonishment, saw the light dancing, as it were, towards me—now close to the ground, and then flitting some feet above it, whirling in rapid circles, as if tossed by the wavering wind. The light at last settled at some dozen feet distant, giving forth a long, thin, bluish flame. I could hear no

footstep, neither could I see the faintest outline or shadow of any one, and yet there the light was, to mark the whereabouts of my enemy.

Cold and shivering I lay upon the ground, gasping for breath, and watching the vicinity of my mysterious and scarcely visible opponent. At last, terror crept into my heart. "It may be the devil," thought I, "or some one of his countless emissaries." No sooner was this idea engendered, than my knees knocked together with fear, my heart thumped against my bosom, my teeth chattered, and each mud-clotted hair rose stiff and straight as the quills upon the prickly hedgehog. With eyes riveted on the spot, I remained gazing until they ached with the intensity of the stare.

The first pale streak of the early dawn now shot itself along the border of the East, tinging the black clouds in the horizon with its faint ray, and announcing that the reign

of night was over. Never was intelligence more gratefully received. Now should I see my puzzling neighbour, provided he did not vanish at the crowing of the cock, who, at this moment, threw his bold challenge on the breeze ; but still the light burned brightly as before. Again the cock crowed, and still the flame remained.

Five or ten minutes more, and the mystery must be solved. The broad band of morning's dawn stretched itself wider and wider. A blood-red ray streamed suddenly from the white-bleached canopy, and darted like an arrow upon the very spot where the flame was burning. In an instant it became thin and white as a piece of floating gossamer, or the curling, transparent mist which veils the flood at eventide. I started from my recumbent posture, and hurried towards the spot ; but, as I approached the light, with unblinking eyes, it gradually dissolved and faded from my view, and, when I arrived there, nothing

was visible but a heap of decayed and wet rushes, in the middle of a stagnant pool of water.

How I stared ! I rubbed my smarting eyes, doubtful of the accuracy of their powers. Was it then a vapour of the earth ? Ha, ha, ha ! (laughed Peter Bivins.) Yes, after all, I then knew the vagary was but a dazzling, misleading Will o' the Wisp.

CHAPTER II.

THE CLANDESTINE LOVERS ; OR, THE JACK
O' LANTERN CONTINUED.

Upon discovering the cause of my unfortunate run, (continued Peter,) I felt almost ready to drive my head against the nearest tree. There I was, soaked from head to foot, scarcely a remnant of clothes hanging upon my limbs, scratched and lacerated, cold, breathless, and weary, and all occasioned by this vapour which shines by night, to lead, I suppose, miserable mortals into swamps and pools. Vexed and as wretched as any poor devil could be, I pointed towards home, and slinked back with a heavy heart and aching limbs.

Some miles I had to traverse before reaching my lodgings, which consisted of a couple of rooms, as near the blue vault of heaven as attics generally are. Upon ascending the staircase, having admitted myself by one of those bachelor conveniences, a latch-key, I thought a sound resembling a hiccup or a sob saluted my ear: The old rickety stairs creaked under my tread, heralding my approach, and before I could turn the handle of the door, it was thrown wide open, and in a moment I was caught in the warm, loving arms of Nancy Spicer.

Poor girl! there she had been watching the long, dreary night through, every minute seeming an hour, and every hour an age. A thousand fearful forebodings of my fate had been conjured up in her imagination. Murder was one of the mildest; and if the smallest vestige of my remains had been restored to her, when the anticipations of evil were at their frenzied pitch, they would have afforded unexpected consolation.

"Where have you been?" inquired she, with choking voice. "Where have you been, Peter, this livelong night?"

"A dance over the bogs, love," replied I, with a shudder, "and as long a run as most men have had for the like fee, I know."

"And what did you run after?" asked Nancy.

"One of those d—d William Vapours," replied I.

"William Vapours!" repeated she. "I never heard of that name in this town."

"And I wish I hadn't seen one of the family on the outside of it," returned I.

After a little more nonsense of this kind, I told her the plain facts, and never saw a girl so tickled at anything in all my life. She laughed and screamed, and held on her sides as though they'd split.

"This is worth sitting up all night to hear," said she, still laughing, "and pays me well for all the misery I've endured. And

yet, dear Peter," continued she, "your plight is so truly woe-begone, that I am more than half inclined to have another good cry."

"Leave that for another time," returned I, "and see about getting me some piping hot coffee, while I change my rags for something dry and comfortable."

"Certainly I will, Peter," replied she. "But I must be quick, for the hour for work is approaching."

In a few minutes I had made myself many shades more comfortable, and when I returned to the room there was everything ready that a cold and hungry fellow could want. The fire was bright and cheerful, a hot buttered toast was resting on the fender, and a pot of coffee bubbled and steamed upon the hob.

"There," said Nancy, wheeling a chair before the grate, and so close to it that if I'd been of a lusty form I should soon have melted some of my superfluous weight, "there, Peter, now make yourself warm through."

In very quick time I despatched a good allowance of the prepared dainties, and at last my eyelids began to grow so heavy, blinking and winking, that even the tattle of charming Nancy could no longer keep me from the much-desired and long-wanted doze. To and fro my head swayed, my eyes became sealed, my ears dull to pleasing sounds, and in the genial warmth of the blazing fire opposite I slept fast and sound.

How long I had continued in this pleasant situation I know not; but it seemed a few brief moments had only passed when I was disturbed from my sweet slumber by volleys of laughter, and shrieks of triumph. Stretching open my stiffened eyeballs, I gazed round the room and saw that I was alone. Thinking it was a dream only that roused me from forgetfulness of my recently-endured miseries, I was again settling myself to enjoyment, when the noise increased tenfold. I, with a hearty grumble, rose from my seat to learn the cause

of the row, which evidently proceeded from the street, and upon proceeding to look out of the window, I saw a crowd of persons, chiefly composed of girls and boys, just opposite the house. They were hooting, yelling, and laughing at something immediately under my window, but, from the projecting leads covering the entrance, I could not discover what it was.

“Tug again, old gal,” cried one.

“Ha, ha, ha!—she’ll not break down for want of bone,” hallooed another.

“Shake up your rags, and at ’em again,” bawled a third, and the crowd continued to increase and the uproar to become deafening.

Added to the din of human voices, somebody was thundering away at the knocker of the street-door, and pulling the bell with no ordinary vengeance.

Determining to learn the reason of so much rioting and confusion, I descended the first

flight of stairs, and poked my head out of a window commanding a view of the scene below.

Merciful heaven ! how can I describe my horror at the sight that presented itself ! There was Nancy Spicer caught by her garments in the shutting of the door, and exposing the best shaped legs, sorely against her will, that a woman ever had just reason to be proud of, to some three score jeering rascals of boys, mixed with an infusion of the softer sex, who, however, on that occasion evinced little less pleasure at the untoward mishap.

“Peter Bivin, I’m looking at ye,” bawled a voice, as I glanced furiously around, and then all eyes were directed at me, and a roar of laughter followed. In an instant I was at the door, and as quickly relieved poor Nancy from her unhappy position. With a shriek of delight she fell into my arms, and welcomed her rescuer with unshed tears swimming in her eyes.

According to her account, when I had fallen asleep she quitted the room for the purpose of proceeding to her work, and as she was leaving the house, by some ill-wind of fate, her clothes became shut in with the door, and that so firmly that notwithstanding her utmost endeavours to free them, she found it impossible to do so. Then it was that the crowd began to collect, and, among the first, two of her rivals, who eked her persecutors on ; and there she had to stand, like a bull tied to the stake, to be baited by ruthless enemies, until I came to release her. My landlady, who was as deaf as a post, did not hear the loud knocks bestowed on the door, and thus it was poor Nancy had to continue so long the object of rude and sportive jest, a fixture to the doorpost.

The tables were now turned ; and, although I was truly indignant at the conduct of the mob, I could not refrain from laughing at the strange incident which occasioned Nancy

Spicer to make public the beauties of her "understandings."

"They are now," continued Peter, "not so free from splent and spavin as they were then. Age and standing at the mangle all day is sure to shake the pins, and poor Nancy's are shaky for'ard, in consequence. However, she's as blithe as a bee, and—"

"Wot's the odds!" interrupted Toddy.

"Ah! what indeed!" chimed in Mr. Wirkem. "Take a moistener, Peter, and God bless you and Nancy too!" continued the old coachman, draining his glass.

CHAPTER III.

MATRIMONIAL ADVERTISEMENTS.

The night continued to be spent lightly and merrily as those which had preceded it. Songs were sung, jokes cracked, and adventures recounted with mirth and glee, ringing through the room, each moment fleeing, with joy to mark its flight.

“Silence,” called the President; “silence,” continued he; but the relish of a general roar was not yet expended, and the signal, therefore, not so readily obeyed.

“Time flies fast, the poet sings,” chaunted the old coachman, good-humouredly, notwithstanding the rebellious disobedience of his order.

"So he does, Dick," responded Tom Short.

"Then surely it is wise," continued Mr. Wirkem, in a bass but musical voice, and throwing out his ample chest like the inflated crop of a conceited pigeon, "in jolly grog to dip his wings!"

"There's a chaunter!" exclaimed one-eyed Jack, admiringly.

"And drown him as he flies," continued the President.

"Bravely warbled," shouted Jack Plywel.
"Let's have the rest, Dick," continued he.

"It's all I know of the old ditty," replied the President.

"Then try another," responded Jacob. "I had no idea you were such an-out-an-out cock nightingale."

"I should like to know what he ain't an-out-an-outer at?" said John Hogg. "I'm blessed if I don't think he could preach a sermon, if pushed to extremities!"

"No, no, Jack," replied the old coachman, shaking his head. "I never should shine in

a pulpit-box. A man ought to be many stages better than his neighbours before he begins to lecture 'em on *their* bad goings-on. 'Do as I tell ye and not as I do,' is the excuse some parsons like to hold out; but that's humbug, sheer humbug, gentlemen," continued Mr. Wirkem. "Set an example, I say; spring your own osses along the road and take the lead. Show that you believe it to be the straightest, nearest, and best paved by taking it yourself, and don't stand like a mere finger-post pointing out the direction. For example, supposing I and you, Bill Johnson, were going to Putney instead of to Heaven; and you-*relied* on my superior judgment for the best path to that suburban village—what would you think of me, when we came to three or four cross-roads, if I was to say, 'There, Bill, is the nicest, without the fag-end of a doubt; but I'm going to take this.'"

"Hookey Walker!" replied the Vice-president.

"Of course you would say Hookey Walker, or think so," returned Mr. Wirkem. "It's one of the first laws of nature for each man to choose, when he has the opportunity, the best for himself in all things, and this particular grain of selfishness applies to matters concerning this world as it does in the one to come. No, no, no," continued the old coachman, "I like folks to be consistent, act up to their principles, and, instead of talking so much of what we *ought* to do, to start and shew the way themselves."

"There's a specimen of what he can say!" observed John Hogg to Melancholy Joey.

"He's a top carpenter, certainly," replied Mr. Wyper, "and fit to carry the board of feathers in any company," continued he.

"Don't croak about buryins," rejoined Jack. "As long as we are alive, let's *be* alive," added he.

"Come, Dick Wirkem," said Jacob Plywel, "let's have a stave without fixing

ye with Peter's call. It will come better as a gift."

"Without a murmur," responded the President; and throwing himself back in his chair, he gave, with a deep stentorian voice, the following words.

There's a charm in spring,
When everything
Is bursting from the ground;
When pleasant showers
Bring forth the flowers,
And all is life around.

In summer's day,
The fragrant hay
Most sweetly scents the breeze;
And all is still,
Save murm'ring rill,
Or sound of humming bees.

Old Autumn comes:
With trusty guns,
In quest of birds we roam;
With unerring aim
We mark the game,
And proudly bear it home.

THE STAGE COACH,

A winter's night
Has its delight—
 Around old stories go ;
A winter's day
We're blithe and gay,
 Defying ice and snow.

A country life,
Without the strife
 And noisy din of town,
Is all I need :
I take no heed
 Of splendour or renown.

And when I die,
Oh ! let me lie
 Where trees above me wave ;
Let wild plants bloom
Around my tomb,
 My quiet country grave.

“A long time hence, Dick, I hope,” observed Tom Short, “a very long time hence,” repeated he, as the President completed his song.

“That's the universal sentiment in this society,” added Jacob Plywel, “I know.”

A murmur of assent ran round the room, and each nodded to his neighbour and sipped his glass in silence.

For nearly a minute the old coachman made no response, but kept his eyes bent stedfastly on the ceiling. At length he too lifted his glass, and as he did so, a tear stole silently down his cheek, and mingled with the potent beverage at his lips.

"God bless ye all!" at last said he emphatically. "God bless ye, and I *do* hope it may be some time before I give up this chair for 'my quiet country grave.' I'm in no great hurry for that birth, I assure ye."

"None but a right down nincompoop would," observed John Hogg. "For my part," continued he, "I can't bear to think of givin up certain comforts on earth, for uncertain—and it always seems to me blessed uncertain ones too—in the world wat's a-comin."

"Ah!" exclaimed Toddy, "that's my notions. A bird in the hand's worth two on the

tree. Ha, ha! Money down, I say — no credit."

"Now, Peter Bivin," said the President, "we'll have your right exercised without further loss of time."

"I shall call upon your friend opposite, then," replied Peter—"our worthy Vice."

"And a good choice it is," observed Jacob Plywel.

"But I've had one spell," said the Vice-president.

"A long time ago," returned Mr. Wirkem; "but we're none free from double turns, remember," continued he.

"Nor should we be, by this reason," added Tom Short—"when a man's tried and found good, we have that confidence in him which we can't have in a novice."

"As there's no escape, then," replied the Vice-president, "I shall not jib, but go off at once."

"Said like a man," hiccupped Toddy, who

began to exhibit symptoms of a free indulgence in potions deep and strong. His eyes looked glassy, and he stretched the lids as wide as their natural limits would permit, evidently doubtful of the number of objects reflected in the organs of vision. The candles were increased twenty-fold, and a couple of faces to each individual present confused the brain of the ex-postboy, muddled with thick and foggy fumes.

I was bred and born in a hayloft, nursed and brought up in a training-stable, (began the Vice-president.)

“ Oh, Mr. Wirkem, sir !” exclaimed one-eyed Jack, “ there’s cradling I love to hear of.”

The President motioned for silence, and not a word of further interruption was offered.

My father had been a jockey, and a better never pulled a snaffle or drew on the silk, (resumed the Vice-president.) But, when I

first opened my eyes to this world, he was head-groom in a celebrated racing-stable at Newmarket, in consequence of becoming too heavy to ride, and not having saved enough money to commence business with on his own account.

When I was just three years old I lost my mother, and at this very green age was left entirely to the care of chance, and the rough nursing of the stable-boys. In the stable all day and over it all night, I, as it may be supposed, got a very early insight to all matters concerning a horse, and, to the best of my recollection, I could ride tolerably decent before I could walk well. When a lad of ten I was the pride of my father, and rode the crack horses in training; and at twelve I started in my first public race, as a feather-weight. After this I rode very frequently, and was well known as the gem of the course.

It is hardly necessary for me to say, that

ninety-nine jockeys out of every hundred are, as a matter of business, incorrigible rogues, and neither my father nor myself were exceptions to the rule. I learned, before my A B C, that the best horse in the race is seldom the winner, and that an honest man would soon starve in a training-stable, from the owner to the meanest lad in it.

“Obey orders, if we break masters,” my father used to say. “Never question, Bill; but do as you’re told, and remember a jock rides to live, no matter how.”

This was one of my early lessons, and I studied to profit by such wholesome advice.

At a Newmarket October meeting, when I was just twenty year old, I was engaged to ride a nag called Safedo, in a match for a thousand, against another horse named Shell-out; and, as the got-up affair was one of the strangest I ever knew of, and materially affected my future life, I’ll relate it as it occurred.

On the morning this event was to come off, Mr. Civil, the owner of Safedo, called me on one side and said, "You're to make a waiting-race of it, and *wait* so long that you can't recover the distance. In other words, lose it *cleverly*."

"I'll try my best, sir," replied I.

"You'll have some difficulty in losing," rejoined Mr. Civil. "The horse can run away from Shellout, and beat him in a canter."

"So I thought," returned I.

"The worst of it is," added Mr. Civil, pettishly, "he is so *much* the best. But then," continued he, "the odds would not be two to one on him if he was n't known to be so."

"I suppose my mate knows he's to win," observed I.

"Not that I am aware of," replied Mr. Civil. "Indeed, until this morning, I intended to win the match; but some friends of mine overruled my intentions, and one can always

afford to drop one thousand to pocket five," continued he, smiling.

"Bill," said my father, after I was dismissed by Mr. Civil, "you're to lose the match, I hear."

"I am," replied I.

"Ah!" groaned he, "you'll have a hard job to do it. Your horse'll win it afore you can get a pull at him."

"Why not hocuss him, then?" inquired I.

"I offered to do it," replied he, in a tone of disgust at his proffered services being so ill-requited. "I offered to do it; but Civil said the public made such a yapping at that plan of safemaking, that he would never let another horse of his have a pill."

"Then why not a pail of water?" returned I; "that would do as well."

"Quite," replied my father, "and so I said; but it was no use; the appearances were just as bad," rejoined he.

"Then I must do my best," said I, "and lose as well as I can."

"It's a bad business," responded my father, shaking his head. "I don't see how we're to pull through with credit; but the best plan for you to adopt is to tell Shellout's jock, at your best opportunity, that you're going to run last. He then will assist you."

"A good idea," returned I. "That's the plank that will carry us over."

"Yes; he can pretend to cut you down at first," said my father, "and enable you to go in with good intentions at the last few strides."

"Who rides Shellout?" asked I.

"Tom Night, I believe," replied my father. "But it matters not. Any one will do you the turn we require. But mind," continued he, "not to say a word to him until you're mounted. Because, as the market stands, it would be worth his while to get the pot on for his own account, and that would blow the whole matter to every tout and leg in the ring."

In due time we were mounted, and, at the word "Go," off we went at a gentle pace, stride and stride.

"Go on, Tom," said I.

"I'll wait on ye," he replied.

"No, no," rejoined I; "make play."

"'Gainst orders," returned he.

"No matter," added I. "You're to win."

"What do you mean?" inquired Tom.

"That I'm to lose somehow," replied I; "and so cut me down, right-away, there's a good fellow."

"By G—d!" exclaimed he, "them's *my orders*. I'm to lose somehow or other."

Here was a pretty pickle for us. Both had secret orders to lose, and of course one must disobey them.

"I daren't assist you," said Tom Night; "my master's too heavy with the losing side. I *must* go in last."

"And so must I," I replied. "It's more than my life's worth to win the match."

"Then here goes for a certainty," added he; and, throwing his feet from the stirrups, he threw himself, or rather dropped from the saddle, on to the ground, leaving his horse to race with the wind, or any thing else more suited to his free inclination.

"That's an artful tumble," said I to myself, "and I dare say you think I'm floored by it; but here goes for its equal:" and, turning my nag's head from the course, I tipped him the persuaders and *made* him run away with me clean across the heath.

Never was there such an uproar as at the result of this match. I caught it on both sides. Those who would have won by my losing were vexed at being baulked of their game, so nicely cooked; and those who had backed the horse raved at the palpable swindle. All bets were declared void; and my master, to shelter himself, bribed me to sign a written confession that I agreed to sell the race through the instigation of a no-

torious blackleg, who, for a certain consideration, consented not to take the trouble of denying the libel; for, as to the injury accruing to him from it, there could be none. To paint the devil blacker than he really is, is impossible.

After this transaction I quitted the turf; and, with five hundred pounds, the wages and reward of many a cross, I came to London in search of a coachman's berth, resolving, according to my father's wish, to take to the box, in lieu of the saddle.

The very first night I arrived in town, my eye caught, in a newspaper, an advertisement for a wife; and after this there were two others for the same kind of article; and I couldn't help remarking that all three gentlemen required a nice comfortable fortune at the same time.

"I'd rather sit down settled for life with a rib, and lots of the rowdy," said I to myself, "than mount a box in all weathers at all

seasons. Hang me if I don't advertise, too, for a wife and a fortune, and try *my* luck in the lottery of matrimony."

With this I copied one of the advertisements, which seemed to describe me exactly, and directed a reply to be sent to Y. Z., at a certain post-office in the city.

The next day I carried it to the newspaper-office myself, and delivered it, with, I believe, the first, and, consequently, maiden blush that ever tinged a cheek of mine.

"One guinea," said the man, stretching his hand out of a sort of pigeon-hole, and taking a glance at the document as he took it from me. "One guinea," repeated he, eyeing me out of the corner of his eyes, as much as to say, "pretty soup you'd make."

CHAPTER IV.

MATRIMONIAL ADVERTISEMENTS.

With some impatience I waited in expectation of receiving a reply, and went three times a day to inquire if there was a letter for Y. Z. At the end of four days, and just when I began to think that my investment of one pound one was a losing speculation, I had a note, written in a very neat hand, stating "that the writer was a young lady at boarding-school, and in particular want of a husband of the kind described in the advertisement; that she was entitled to a very pretty property on coming of age, which event would take place within three years, and that the sooner an interview took place the better."

Inflated with hope, like a bladder full of wind, I returned an answer, as requested, to the post-office at Harrow, saying, "how charmed I was to receive the letter, and that, if agreeable, I would be in that neighbourhood the following day." To this another note came, "to thank me for my complimentary haste, and that if I would be in Harrow churchyard the next evening at sunset, my fair and unknown correspondent would endeavour to meet me."

It was a fine glowing evening as I climbed the steep hill leading to the well-known church. The setting sun tipped the vane on the old spire with dazzling light, and his last rays threw long lingering shadows on the ground, as if parting with reluctance from the bright, but fading face of Nature. The first dried leaves, plucked by Autumn's withering hand, whirled in the light breeze, and fell scattering to the ground. The croaking toad and chirping cricket told of the sinking day, and

all things courting sleep at the coming night were hastening to repose. Rook cawed to rook, as he wheeled to the topmost branch of some towering elm or sturdy oak, and, shaking his jetty plumage, buried his head beneath his broad, strong wing. The robin trilled his evening song on the hawthorn-bough, and then, securing the shelter of the broad-leaved ivy clinging to its trunk, gave place to the warbling nightingale.

The shades fell thicker and thicker, and, as I entered the churchyard — thickly strewn with graves and tombs, some sunk level with the ground, crumbling and rotting in common corruption — the darkness was falling fast around. Pacing to and fro on the path leading past the tomb on which Byron used to sun himself and coin his dreams of ideal bliss, I waited with throbbing heart for the coming of my love. Each step falling on my ear caused my breath to stop, and, such was the strangeness of my feelings, that, although I was dis-

appointed several times at the false alarm, yet I was still glad of the respite.

A long half hour passed. The clock struck the time, as though he had grown sluggish in his course, and the very bell sounded as if the many winter winds and suns of summer had cracked the music of its voice. At length, after many unnecessary doubts and fears, I saw a tall lady enter the churchyard-gate, and look stealthily around her. She was dressed in a long black cloak, which swept to her heels, and over her face was a thick black veil. Turning to the right and to the left, as if fearing pursuit, or the observance of some one, she tripped quickly towards me, and I, feeling assured it was the object of my intended affection, hastened to meet her.

“Miss,” said I, taking off my hat, and making my best bow, “I’m Y. Z.”

“Heaven be praised!” returned the lady in a flutter, “heaven be praised! but are we watched—are you *quite* sure that we meet ‘by moonlight alone?’ ”

"Quite, my dear young lady," replied I. "Calm this twittering, and repose in my protection."

"I will," responded she, throwing out her arms, and looking up to the starry sky, "I will; so help me tater!"

I was much astounded at this exclamation and manner of my was-to-be adored. I began to fear that I might have fallen in with a cracked saucepan, and my sanguine hopes commenced quaking at the foundation.

"May I," said I, offering her my arm, and leading her slowly up the gravel-walk, "may I inquire your family name?"

"What's in a name?" responded she, quickly. "A Smith by any other would smell as sweet."

We were at this moment opposite the stone which was the favourite resting-place of Lord Byron.

"There," said my companion, squatting upon the tomb for one short second, and,

jumping off again, "there! now I *can* say I've sat upon it. But," continued she, "you asked me my name."

"I did," returned I, perplexed beyond description at the conduct of my supposed future beloved.

"First, then, sir knight of the mysterious initials," rejoined the lady, "let me hear, by right of precedence, the lineal race from whom you derive that name which your godfathers and godmothers gave to you."

"Johnson," replied I. "My name's William Johnson, generally called Bill."

"The Johnsons," repeated the lady, "particularly the Bill Johnsons," continued she, "are members of the human family widely spread over the face of the earth. The name is to be met with little less frequently than Jones or Smith, and goes far to show both the fecundity of the stock and the antiquity of its origin. I love and revere the name of Johnson!"

“It gives me great pleasure to hear you say so, miss,” returned I. “And, now, perhaps, I shall be favoured with yours.”

“Trice up the slack of your jaw,” said the lady, “and listen. *My* name is Sarah Cutlet. On the mutton hills my father keeps his shop — a jolly cock — whose constant care is to increase his fat, and keep his only daughter in the shop. But I had heard of larks, and longed to have a spree. That moon which rose to-night, round as an orange, had scarcely filled her horns with light, when ——.”

At this moment every grave seemed to yawn and throw up its occupant. From behind each mound and stone a figure rose, while the air rang and echoed with one burst of boisterous laughter.

“Bill Johnson,” said the young lady, tucking up her cloak as a boy does his pinafore in preparation for a run, “if you respect your bones, cut your lucky.”

"What do I see?" said I, terrified beyond description.

"Tarry not; but away," replied she, giving me a hint to go by a tremendous kick in the rear.

Whir-r-r, phiz, pop, r-r-r-r, and in an instant I was surrounded by a troop of whooping devils, each grasping a lighted squib in his hand.

"Hurrah, my boys," cried a voice, "give it him!"

Quick as lightning a thought struck me that I'd been tricked, and was about to suffer the martyrdom of my want of caution and discretion. No sooner did I conceive this than, turning my back upon the thickest of my enemies, I rushed through those who faced me, and took to leather. Fear lent me his speedy aid. My heels seemed winged, and scarcely touched the ground as I skimmed from the scene of my mortification. Close to them, however, followed some of the hooting,

screaming crowd, holding their hissing, fiery, missiles within a few inches of my rear, and occasionally whizzing them at me with direful precision. Scorched and singed, I pursued my course, ignorant and careless of whither I was going, so long as I outstripped my enemies.

“Catch him,” hallooed somebody, “catch him, or he’ll escape his ducking.”

I recognized the voice. It was my lady-love.

“Ducking !” I mentally exclaimed, “I shall be drowned,” and on I went with redoubled efforts. Every now and then a squib exploded on my back, head, and neck, and amidst a blaze of fireworks I reached the bottom of the hill, with some little distance gained on my pursuers. Here, however, my breath began to get expended. “’Tis the pace that kills,” thought I, “and so here goes for a nick of luck, and a try of the artful.” With this I sprung over the hedge at the corner of a lane,

and dropped into the ditch on the opposite side.

Over burst the crowd, almost at a simultaneous bound, when I crawled through a gap back into the road again, and running along the grassy bank, in order that my footfall should be silent, I obtained a start of some five hundred yards before my track was discovered by my pursuers.

With a yell they again swept after me ; but never again to approach within offensive distance. Once or twice, indeed, a stone hummed past my head, but without coming in contact with it.

Finding that my stratagem had succeeded in getting me from their clutches, they, too, had recourse to one, and as I neared a long row of cottages, I heard the awful cry of "Stop thief, stop thief!" burst from twenty tongues.

As if by magic, doors, windows, and garden-gates were thrown open. Clusters of

heads emerged. Men, women, children, and yelping curs joined in the chase. One or two, more daring than the rest, put themselves with open arms before me, and got knocked down for their temerity. Darting from one, dodging from another, and leaving both the skirts of my coat in the hands of some successful snatchers, I avoided every unfriendly grasp, and continued my career. Still the cries of "Stop thief!" echoed far and wide. The clatter of a horse's hoofs now struck my ear.

"Halt," cried a loud and gruff voice, "halt, or I'll fire at ye."

I turned my head slightly, and saw within a few strides of me the cloaked figure of a horse-patrol, and a hand extended, holding the bright barrel of a holster-pistol.

"Hold," hallooed I, stopping, "I'm your prisoner."

"Just in time to save a charge," replied he, pulling up his horse. "I was about send-

ing a whistling messenger after ye. Who charges him?" continued he, turning to the crowd as they came up. "And what's the offence?"

"Stealing a woman," replied a voice.

"Stealing a woman!" repeated the patrol with unequivocal contempt. "Pshaw! is that all? Go on about your business," continued he; "I thought it was robbing a hen-roost, or orchard, or some such petty larceny."

The mob of pursuers now gathered round me, shouting, "Who wants a wife? Get home, hang, or drown yourself!" jeering, hooting, and roaring with laughter. The leader of the band was my hopeful young lady, whose bonnet, or rather the remains of whose bonnet, veil, and cloak, hung in tatters about her person, permitting the under-garments to be seen, consisting of that costume generally adopted by the male portion of the community.

"He took me for a gal," said she, gasping

for breath, "but my starting kick convinced him, I expect, of the contrary."

"Base deceiver!" exclaimed I, indignantly.

"Listen to that, Jack," cried a grinning urchin, a little in the background; "he calls ye a base deceiver!" and then such another roar pealed from the throng as almost deafened me.

The patrol was now briefly told the particulars of the affair by a bystander, and he seemed mightily tickled at the narration.

"Well, gentlemen!" said he, "you've had a good bit of fun with this young chap, and there's no harm come of it. If you'll take an old hand's advice, the sooner all of ye get back to school the better; for I heard the bell ringing when I was on the top of the hill."

"Did you!" responded a voice; "then here's off," and away the major part of my tormentors went, without further observation or annoyance.

“I tell you this, young fellow,” observed the patrol, turning his horse in the same direction — “when you make your next appointment with a strange lass, take care she doesn’t turn out to be a Harrow boy.”

The Steam Chase



*When, plying, plying, plying, and on our instance, I was
surrounded by a troop of whirling devils.*



CHAPTER V.

MATRIMONIAL ADVERTISEMENTS CONTINUED.

Dead beat in my first start for the matrimonial stakes, (continued the Vice-president,) and feeling that I was completely floored and down upon my hocks, I made up my mind to have nothing more to do with the dangerous business, but set about getting a coachman's situation at once. Accordingly, the following day I betook myself towards the Bull Inn, Aldgate, for the purpose of making some inquiries, when, as I was passing the post-office, where I directed the answers to my advertisement to be sent, something put it suddenly into my head to ask if there was

another letter for Y. Z., and sure-ly another was thrust into my fist.

Cracking the seal, I read these words :—

“ I’m the widder of a brave man wot died in the service of his kuntry, without children, male or female. Not liking a lonesome life, I’m much inclined for another husband, and, if so be you are young, rich, and ansum, so am I, and we should pair well. If you are serious, and it is not a oaks, you can see me on Sunday next in the evening at the chapel in Black friars road. I shall sit near the pulpit, and wear widder’s weeds, and in my right hand I shall hold a glass smell-bottle, so you can’t mistake *me*. If you will meet me according to my wishes, let me know how I shall know *you*, and by what sign. Address to Eliza, No. 4, Maryland buildings, Cheg-worth street.”

This appeared to me so genuine, that my resolution of giving up the affair vanished, and I determined to have one more start for

the gold cup. If, thought I, there should be another trap, no harm can come of falling into it, for in a chapel no one dare kick up a row. Besides, experience makes us cautious, and I intended to adopt such a plan as would ensure my not being made game of again.

To Eliza's letter I accordingly returned a reply, that "I would be at the appointed place at the time named, and that I should hold in my left hand a red rose as the outward symbol of my earnestness;" intending, however, to keep the said symbol in my hat until I had made a survey of the object of attack, and to be guided by circumstances whether I should mount my colours, or make a draw of it.

After sun-down on the following Sunday, I took my way, with a mixture of hope and fear making a sort of sea-pie in my buzzum, towards the meeting-house. The church-bells were chiming in every direction, as I crossed Blackfriar's Bridge, and their many tongues

booming over the water in the still, soft evening breeze echoed far away, and sounded like the mockery of some tinkling rivals deeply buried in the bowels of the earth.

As I approached the chapel, I saw a crowd hurrying to the doors, and, joining the throng, I began to look about for a widow in weeds, and a smelling-bottle.

"Pray, sir," said a young lady to me, as I was about to cross the threshold, and looking earnestly into my face, "does the Reverend Mr. Maggs deliver to-night?"

"God knows, miss," replied I; "but upon my soul I don't!"

The young woman stared, and passed on.

Being a stranger in a place of worship, I didn't know exactly how to manage my ribands. However, I determined to imitate others as near as possible, and, upon going into a sort of stall near a thing looking like a tub with the top off, I began to groan, just as if I'd got a touch of the spasms, seeing two

old ladies in the same box grunting also. I don't know whether my groans sounded unprofessional from want of practice; but the old ladies shut up shop when I began to roar, and a great many eyes were directed to the quarter where I sat. Now and then I cast my eye round to catch a glimpse of the widow; but as the clergyman mounted the steps to the pulpit, I could see no one resembling Eliza.

"My brethren," said the clergyman, drawing the back of a hand across his lips, as a sort of free and easy wipe, "you'll all be damned."

"Come, come," said I to myself, "that's queerish language of a Sunday night."

"I repeat," said he, giving a thundering bang with his clenched fist on the desk before him, "that you'll all be damned."

"Pleasant news," thought I.

"Unless," continued the clergyman, suddenly becoming good-tempered, and spread-

ing out his arms with a smiling, insinuating face, "unless you'll come to the shepherd's fold."

"Oh!" groaned one of my old box companions, and rocking herself to and fro, "oh, oh, oh!"

"Ha!" echoed the other. "Ha! oh! Ha!"

"Will ye come?" asked the parson, looking as if he was examining the phizzes of every body present; "I say, will ye come? or will you go to the devil? That's the plain and simple question," continued he.

Murmurs and groans were now heard from all quarters of the chapel.

"Don't ye know," continued he, again getting into a towering rage, "that there's a pit without a bottom, so that it never can be filled up, on purpose for sinners to be chained and bound in flaming brimstone for ever and ever, without water to drink, or any thing else to cool your parched and thirsty throats?"

The old ladies wriggled on their seats, as though they began to have a taste of the salt-petre.

“And will ye rush and throw yourselves head over heels into it?” said he, after a pause. “Will ye leave your imperishable, immortal spirits in livid sulphur to eternity, which has no end, or will ye—,” and he smiled like a fancy duck swallowing tadpoles —“or will ye go with me into the garden of bliss, where there’s no end of comforts—where the worm has not to spin, or the labourer to toil? I say, which will ye do? for this is your choice.”

I thought there could be but one opinion upon the subject, and had a great mind to say so; but the parson checked me, by throwing himself into a sparring attitude, and letting fly into the air, as if he was fibbing a fellow, or giving him an upper cut.

“I’m your champion,” continued the clergyman, again squaring. “I’m fighting the

devil. Yes, I stand forth to trip up and wrestle with the cloven-footed tempter. I clutch and seize the snarer of souls, and frustrate his wickedness. I hunt him in every nook and corner. I give him no breathing moment. But think ye the reward of the battle is to be yours, if ye hearken not to my voice?"

Now, as to any one not hearing his voice within the limits of three hundred square yards, was a matter of impossibility, provided the drums of their ears were not entirely split; and I thought the provision was quite an unnecessary consumption of wind. Just at this moment, however, my attention was attracted by a lady in sables coming towards me on tip-toe. As she approached I saw through the thick black veil which shaded her face that she wore a widow's cap, and the belief that this was "Eliza" herself caused my heart to throb quickly, and I became lost to all other objects. Instinctively I opened

the door of the pew I occupied, and in she walked.

Slowly and particularly I examined the lady as she took a seat opposite. Her figure was tall, and there was a general appearance of good breeding about it, which is to be seen in any thing that has it with half an eye. I caught a glimpse, too, of a nice little foot and ankle, and, thought I, if the face does but agree, and you *are* Eliza, hang me but you'll suit my book to a T.

After a few minutes the lady raised the veil, and disclosed a face that must have been pretty, "in the days when we went gipsying, a long time ago;" but wrinkles and the digs of time were lamentably perceptible in the—I feared to think—rouged cheeks now offered to my gaze. Her eyes were small, and black as jet, and there was a leer in them which revealed something of the fox in her nature; but, thought I, if you're a downy cove, you'll find your match in me.

Just at this moment, after taking as good a stare at me as I did at her, the only remaining proof wanting to confirm my supposition was produced. From a little black silk bag she took a smelling-bottle, and, raising it to her nose, she sniffed away as though she relished the scent.

“Now,” said I to myself, “is it worth the venture? Shall I hoist my colours, or keep ’em down?” For some few minutes I cogitated over the business, till at last the words in her reply, “that she was rich,” weighed the scale in favour of a trial, although the wear and tear of the seasons, and the knowledge of the bean long since being vanished from her tooth, went uncommonly against my palate.

From my hat I took the red rose, and, sticking it into a button-hole, I looked hard in her face, to see what the effect would be. A slight smile separated her lips; but I am sorry to say made no front tooth visible. Every upper rail was clean gone; not even a stump remaining to tell of a whereabouts.

A shudder ran through my frame as if a pail of cold water had been sluiced down my back. How sorry I was that I'd shown my colours! However, as I was in for the plate, I resolved to have a canter for it, if it was only to save appearances.

After the parson had talked himself hoarse as an old rook with the influenza, the meeting separated, and, as the lady quitted the pew, I whispered "Y. Z." She bowed as I whispered the letters, and, when we got outside of the chapel, took my offered arm as though we had been old acquaintances.

There was a dreadful pause for some few minutes. I didn't know what to say. At last I stammered out that "it was a very fine evening."

"Yes," she mumbled with her gums, "it is a very fine evening."

"I need scarcely say it gave me much pleasure to find you punctual to your appointment," rejoined I.

“You’re very flattering,” she returned ; and so we went on chattering soft nonsense for some hour and a half.

Tired at length with this, we entered upon business, and from her glowing description of the state of her finances, I began to think a set of teeth anything but indispensable for a desirable wife. I was not far from her head in painting my position equally bright, and, before we separated that night, each believed the other’s statement, and both knew themselves to be unqualified liars.

After leaving Eliza at her residence, with a promise of calling early the following day, and many protestations of admiration and the purest affection, I took my way homewards, with a heart swelling with pride at my own ingenuity and its success. As I was re-crossing the bridge, a voice said just behind me, “Sir, I beg your pardon, but can I say a word with you?”

Upon turning round, I saw a man unshaved,

shabby, and forlorn, holding a battered hat in his hand, in a most humble posture, and looking the homeless, friendless outcast and mendicant.

“And what may you want with me?” inquired I.

“Forgive me, sir,” replied he; “but I think that I can be of service to you.”

“In that case,” returned I, “there’s nothing to forgive. Let me hear what you’ve to say.”

“I saw you walking with a woman known to me,” he added.

“Woman!” repeated I, somewhat stung with the fellow’s freedom. “Well! what of that?”

“More than you think of,” replied he. “But this is not the place for what I’ve to say. Will you follow me into a more private one?”

I hesitated for a moment, but after a short reflection consented. We turned into a court

leading towards the river, a narrow, dark, dismal place, and upon arriving at the door of a dirty-looking ale-house, he asked me if I had any objection to enter and sit while he communicated his intelligence. Agreeing to this proposition, we took an unoccupied box, and, shrouded in the thick cloud of tobacco, blown from as rough a lot of lips as eyes ever beheld or words dropped from, I turned a willing ear to the stranger.

"Excuse my asking a few questions," said he, "for I'll satisfy you before we part of the value and truth of my information. Have you met the widow before this evening?"

"Never," replied I.

"And you *know* nothing whatever about her?" rejoined he.

"Nothing more than she has told me," returned I.

"As I suspected," he observed. "No matter how I heard what was going on," continued he; "sufficient for you to learn that I

was aware of your meeting to-night, and watched your movements in order to turn them to my own profit."

"You are very candid," said I.

"As I intend to be," he replied. "I am a branded felon and penniless wretch," he continued, "who has a price for anything, and I now want to barter my information for some of your money."

"Let me know its value," rejoined I.

"As you are young, confiding, and inexperienced," said he, "I will leave it to your generosity when told. Listen! That woman you met to-night is the widow of my dead brother."

"Your brother!" exclaimed I, in astonishment.

"Ah!" returned he, coolly, "of my brother, *who was hung*; to-morrow it will be a month."

I stared, and was mute with inexpressible horror and surprise.

"She's a *hempen* widow," continued my

informant, "and is now cadging for any chance to live by. If she'd not turned her back upon me, I might have assisted her in this, provided it had been worth my while; but, as it is, I must turn it to my own account by peaching."

"How do I know that you're telling me the truth?" inquired I.

"Go to the governor of Newgate, or any of the turnkeys," replied he, snapping his fingers carelessly, "and ask if Tom Bradshaw wasn't scragged for coining, and his wife for uttering. And should ye doubt who was acquitted, because she *was* his wife, get one of 'em to identify her, and you'll soon find out that what I tell ye is the truth."

I felt the information was too true. Without another remark I gave the poverty-stricken wretch a handful of silver, and forswore for ever all speculations in matrimonial advertisements.

“ Ah !” exclaimed Mr. Wirkem, as the Vice-president came to a stop, “ I much question if good came out of any one of them. Faugh ! fancy a man’s hawking for a wife as he would for a oss ! It’s against common decency.”

Bill Johnson blushed at this remark, and replied, “ Yes, yes, Dick. But, remember, I confessed that I was a young rascal fresh from a hotbed of vice. A great many years have passed away since then, and, although I say it as shouldn’t say it, I’m a very different sort of fish now.”

“ Oh yes !” rejoined the President, hastily, “ I know that, Bill. My observation applied generally, not particularly to your green doing.”

“ To be sure not,” chimed in Jacob Plywel, and everybody echoed, “ to be sure not,” and then everybody raised every glass and drank “ Bill Johnson’s jolly good health,” until everybody was in the very best temper possible.

"Now," observed the President, pulling with more than ordinary difficulty his thick, dropsical-looking watch from the secret depths of his fob, "we've just one hour left to finish our journey in, and, in my humble opinion, we can't do better than clap in the team at once, and make a start of it."

"That's my vote," added Tom Short.

"Then here goes for the call," returned Bill Johnson. "I'll shove Dick Banbury in the traces," continued he. "He's had but one turn."

"I'll take to the collar pleasantly," returned the gentleman dragsman. "And so here's off for the adventures of a day."

CHAPTER VI.

SCENES IN A MADHOUSE.

Some years since I had a strong desire, mingled with dread, to visit one of those abodes of human wretchedness, a private madhouse. What tales of sorrow could be related, what scenes might be pencilled, from the occurrences daily taking place in these receptacles for the mad! A broken-hearted creature, whose extreme misery bleared the brain when the heart was chilled, is *whipped*, that the dull mind may receive an impression. This may be politic, for aught I know; but the reflection of such cruelty—the mere supposition that these acts can take place, with-

out the knowledge of their absolutely doing so — is sufficient to freeze the blood, and vibrate each nerve with horror. Many, whose soaring minds have been so bent upon dazzling pursuits that the concentrated rays of knowledge have scorched and warped the noblest gift to man, the God-like brain, are manacled and chained like beasts of prey. The perfection of female beauty, that once attracted the eyes of admiring crowds—that captivated the hearts of the fickle and most difficult to please — that was a father's pride and mother's idol — may be found wasting in a solitary closet, forgetful of the world, and by the world forgotten. Age, too, that should meet with profound respect, is treated as if it was the beginning, not the ending of life. Childhood, that should be treated with tenderness and affection, receives but hardships or disregard.

A child in a madhouse! What sight can there be more melancholy? A young thing

that should be scouring the fields in the bright sunshine, plucking the wild flowers, and racing with the butterfly; whose song should ring at matin with the lark, and at eve with the nightingale; whose joyous face should be the index of a heart untouched with pain; whose laugh echo should answer to as a sound of unalloyed delight. Such *should* be the state of childhood. But to my story.

It was on a bright afternoon, in the month of October, that I mounted a favourite horse, for the purpose of visiting a private lunatic asylum, within a few miles of London. The *blues* are not generally companions of mine; neither do I choose to anticipate mental distress by permitting the shadows of fear to dull the present with a gloomy presentiment of the future. The past is gone — the future is unknown — the present is alone to be called our own. These are undeniable truisms, and it is a maxim of the humble limner of this sketch to carry them out as far as his ability

will permit; but there are exceptions to the most unexceptionable of rules; and, as I dismounted at the arched gate leading to the asylum, as it was called, I felt an indescribable sensation that I was about to receive a voluntary, a sought-for occasion for distress; which is precisely opposite to my theory for rendering this "vale of tears" a valley of smiles.

An old man, whose hair was frosted with time, stood leaning on a crutch close to the gate, and civilly touched his hat as I offered him the occupation of holding my horse.

"You must pull the bell, sir," said he, as I tried to unfasten the gate.

Loud and long rang the bell as I pulled a chain, and at its completion a roar of laughter pealed from an open window; but *such* a laugh, that a scream of anguish would not have caused more terror in the breast of a listener. A corpulent man answered the summons; and, in reply to my question, "if

Dr. —— was at home?" said, in a deep, surly tone, that "he supposed he was."

"Then give him this letter," said I, offering him the one of introduction.

"You can give it yourself, if you walk up them steps and turns to the door on the right; that is, if he's there. If he ain't, go along the left passage and—"

"Well! what am I to do then?" said I, sharply, to the surly cerberus as he paused in his instructions.

"Ax the first person you sees," replied he, with a smothered sound and a shake of his extensive waistcoat, that were intended to express a laugh.

Without noticing the rudeness of the fat man, except by an involuntary raising of one foot with a strong inclination to apply it, by way of a rejoinder, I entered the room as directed, but it was empty. After waiting a few seconds, in the hope of seeing some one that could or would instruct me, I heard foot-

steps approaching. A lady entered, dressed in deep mourning, and veiled so that I could not catch a glimpse of her features. A footman followed her, and, as if accustomed to the rules of the place, pulled a bell without instructions.

In a few minutes the bell was answered by the appearance of a mild-looking, gentlemanly person, who had passed the vigour of his life. He bowed to both of us and said, "Will you walk with me?" I knew I had no right to go with them, and that he imagined I was accompanying the lady by some indisputable title. However, I entertained a sudden inclination, otherwise called a vulgar curiosity, to learn the cause of her visit, and I followed her footsteps in silence.

We mounted a long, winding staircase, and reached a narrow gallery, on each side of which were doors strongly fastened with bolts and bars. In the top parts of the doors were sliding panels, bolted on the outside, to enable

the watchful keepers, who paraded up and down the gallery, to occasionally look at their unhappy prisoners.

We were passing a door through which a keeper was looking, and I glanced over his shoulder into the apartment. The inmate was a tall, powerfully made man, with a straight-waistcoat on. With measured tread he paced to and fro, and appeared to be imitating a sentinel on duty. He stopped suddenly in his march, and, looking at the keeper through the panel, said, "Halt! Who goes there?"

"Guard," said the keeper, smiling.

"The word?" asked he.

"Waterloo," replied the keeper.

"All's well! Pass on," rejoined the poor maniac, resuming his march.

The keeper closed and bolted the panel. I asked him whether he was a soldier.

"An officer in the ninety-third, sir," said he. "A spent ball at Waterloo tore away

part of his skull behind his left ear, which is the cause of his present state."

"Has he been long so?" I inquired.

"From the hour that he got his wound," was the reply. "He received his Waterloo-medal in this house," continued the keeper, "and, when it was given to him, he seemed to have a transitory gleam of reason; for, placing it on his left breast, he said, while tears trickled down his face, 'it was too dearly gained.' These were the only words of a rational nature that we have heard from his lips."

"Do any of his comrades see him?" I inquired.

"There are but few living now, sir, you know; but there's *one* that comes now and then, although few are aware of it," replied the keeper, with an emphasis upon the one, and a glow upon his features.

"Who is that?" said I.

"His Grace *the* Duke, sir," replied he.

“ God bless him ! ” I involuntarily exclaimed.

By unguarded trifles, by actions that men suppose the scrutinizing eyes of the world do not notice, should opinions be formed of the real condition of the heart and of the mind ; not by the universal hypocrisy and assumption prevailing in all grades of society, from the king to the cobbler, when the performances are imagined to become themes for the tattling-tongued multitude. The simple circumstance of the Duke’s visit to the old demented soldier, who lost his reason in the performance of his duty, showed more plainly that he has a heart worthy of nobility than all the flourishes which clamorous Fame has blown from deeds of greater weight.

“ You’ll find the Doctor and the lady you came with in the fourth room on the right hand,” said the keeper, leaving me. I went to the door, which was unclosed, and entered the apartment without being noticed by the

lady, who was sitting on a sofa with a child on her lap, and closely pressed to her bosom. The child was as fair as a bleached lily. Long, light-brown ringlets hung gracefully down her shoulders, and a pair of soft blue eyes were turned upon the face of her nurse. She appeared to be about eight or nine years old, and I thought a more beautiful little creature I had never seen. The doctor was holding one of her hands, and counting the seconds of a watch, on which he looked. Not a word was spoken for some minutes; but I heard a smothered sob, and I saw a convulsive heaving of the breast in the lady. At length she said, in broken words—

“Is there any alteration? Can you give me any hope?”

“We all should hope, madam,” replied the doctor, “but I cannot say, with truth, that I discover any improvement.”

“Heaven have mercy upon me!” exclaimed she. “What—what *can* be done?”

“ I regret to say that I must remove—”

“ Oh ! Pray don't say so ! My heart is almost broken, sir !” interrupted she, clasping her hands and weeping piteously.

“ It is but a temporary sacrifice,” replied the doctor ; “ and if it were more, the consequences may not bear a comparison.”

“ True, very true. How criminal in me to object ! — Forgive me, and let it be done at once,” said the lady, sobbing at each word.

The doctor, as he passed to leave the room, bowed and motioned me to a chair. In a short time he returned with a pair of scissors in his hand. He was followed by a hard-featured individual, bearing a bowl and a case of razors.

The mother—for it could be only a mother whose kisses were so rapturously printed upon that child's fair brow — started and gently placed the object of her solicitude upon a

sofa, as the doctor entered with his assistant. I now, for the first time, caught a glimpse of her features.

Without being beautiful, there was an expression that could not fail to awaken an interest—so intellectual and proud had Nature formed that forehead; but care and deep affliction had stamped the wrinkles upon it, which time alone should have printed. Her large, dark eyes were red with constant weeping, and her lips were quivering with speechless sorrow. Hair, black as the raven's wing, fell in neglected form upon each side of her pale features; and her tall figure, shaped in one of Nature's faultless moulds, was bent with her load of unmitigated sorrow.

The child seemed quite unconscious of all that was passing. She sat in any posture that she was placed in, and her eyes remained fixed on any object that happened to be before them in a direct line. Not a change passed

over her features, and not one action denoted that the mind directed it. Excepting only the beating pulse and heaving bosom, no corpse could appear more inanimate.

“Would it not be better that this should take place out of your presence?” asked the doctor, in a kind tone.

“No, indeed. I must have every curl,” replied the lady.

“So you shall, and all can be saved for you,” rejoined the doctor.

“I must know—I must *see* that I have all,” was the reply.

The doctor inserted his fingers among the luxuriant ringlets of the little child, and severed one by one close to the head. The lady took each curl, and as the last one was given to her, she fell fainting to the ground.

“Let us take her from the room,” said the doctor.

I assisted in removing her, and as we were

carrying her down the staircase she said, in a scarcely audible whisper—

“Place me in the carriage.”

We did so. The footman jumped upon his stand. “Home!” cried he. The horses sprung eagerly forward, as the coachman slackened his reins, and in a few seconds the carriage was out of sight.

I re-entered the house with the doctor, who said, “Did you not come with that lady?” I replied in the negative, and handed my letter to him. After perusing it, he shook me by the hand, and said, “You have witnessed the melancholy effects of fright, sir, in that unfortunate child.”

I expressed a great wish to hear the particulars, when he said :

“The history is brief, but dreadful. The lady who has just left us, as you might suppose, is her mother. She had been married between three and four years when this child was born, which was the only one. As usually

is the case in such circumstances, the parents' hopes, joys, and everything that was dear to them, appeared concentrated in their infant. One night, when the father and mother were at a ball, the nurse had been telling the child some ghost stories and fairy tales; these no doubt excited her very much previous to being put to rest. After this was done, the nurse, from some unaccountable freak, wrapped a sheet round her person, and stood groaning by the side of the cot. The child raised herself in the bed, uttered one shriek, and from that moment has been as you saw her—a confirmed lunatic. When the parents returned and found their little idol bereft of mind, and the cause (which they learned from the confession of the nurse), you may imagine their feelings and condition better than I can describe them."

"How long since did this occur?" asked I.

"Rather more than eight months," he replied.

"If I had been the father, I should have blown my brains out," said I.

The doctor placed his lips close to my ear, and said in a low voice, "*He did, sir.*"

CHAPTER VII.

SCENES IN A MADHOUSE CONTINUED.

We now stood opposite a door. The doctor placed his finger upon his lips, and said in a low tone—

“Listen—she is generally singing.”

We stayed but a short time; but nothing was heard except a beating noise, as if a hand was striking a board or table. He unfastened the door, and we entered the room without being noticed by the inmate, who was sitting close to a table, and running her fingers upon it as if it were a piano. She was a girl of about eighteen, dressed completely in white. A wreath of white roses, mingled with orange blossoms, surrounded her head. A

white satin dress, richly trimmed with blonde, graced her exquisite figure, and white satin slippers were upon her feet. A pair of long kid gloves and a bouquet of flowers were thrown carelessly upon the table on which she was playing. She was prepared as a bride, and looked as if waiting for the ceremony.

The doctor smiled at the astonishment I exhibited on beholding this unexpected sight, but motioned me to be silent. The regularly-formed features of the poor girl beamed with pleasure, and her large hazel eyes sparkled behind a curtain fringe of long, web-like lashes. There was a restlessness of expression that showed she was labouring under much excitement, but of a pleasurable nature. At length she left her monotonous amusement, and exclaimed :

“I wish he would come. Ah ! There you are !” and, hastily rising from her chair, she rushed towards me with outstretched arms.

I retreated at the movement, when an ap-

pearance of the deepest mortification and disappointment took possession of her.

“No, no, no—it is not him!” she said: “I will sing once more.”

Again, sitting close to the table, she commenced running her fingers upon it, and in a full, round, and rich voice, sung the following words :

Oh ! farewell, dear ! shall we meet again
Ere the rose from thy cheek be faded ?
Ere the furrows of time, deep woe, and pain,
Thy now smiling face have shaded ?

When echoing thy childish mirth with thee,
We never dreamt of parting then :
Our laugh was merry, our hearts were free ;—
When—ah ! when—shall we meet again ?

To distant climes must my footsteps roam,
Over the land and over the sea ;
Still memory recalls my childhood's home,
And the happy hours I passed with thee.

Dearest, farewell ! a few fleeting years,
And I'll retrace the foaming main ;
Oh ! do not weep ; but dry those falling tears,
For, dearest, we shall meet again.

At the conclusion of her song, she took the flowers, and, after looking at them for a short period, began pulling them to pieces. The last leaf was plucked from a stem, and the ruined remnants of the bouquet lay scattered around, when her thoughts appeared to undergo a complete revolution. Her features assumed profound melancholy, and her eyes filled with tears, which remained unshed for a few moments, and then, as if the o'ercharged fountains of her heart had burst their flood-gates, she pressed her hands to her temples and wept, as if years of sorrow had, at length, found vent in tears.

"This looks well," said the doctor; "come, we will leave."

When he had closed the door of the apartment, he continued, "For six weeks we have been hoping for this display of feeling, and I have no doubt that now a speedy cure will be effected."

I was too much moved to speak; but, anti-

icipating my wishes to learn the particulars of the case, he said, as we walked slowly along—

“The lady that you have just seen is the second daughter of an opulent banker. She was engaged to be married to a young country gentleman living in Leicestershire, and much devoted to the sports of the field. They were very strongly attached to each other, and, meeting with the willing consent of their respective parents, the match promised to be truly happy. After a year had passed, the ceremony was fixed to take place in London. The bridal-dress was made, friends were invited to the wedding, and the important day was within the brief space of a week. It was arranged that the young couple should be separated for this week, and accordingly the gentleman quitted town for his country-seat, under the ready promise to be in London on the evening preceding the wedding-day. Upon his arrival in Leicestershire, he found there

was to be a fox-hunt of unusual attractions, and yielding to his wish for the enjoyment of the sport, he determined to join in it, although with some compunction of conscience, as he had stated to his lady that his dangerous amusements should henceforth be abandoned.

“It was past twelve on the night that he was expected to arrive, but no tidings had been received of him. Hour after hour was tolled by the church-clocks, as the disappointed and anxious girl sat watching the dial of a time-piece, and listening to every approaching sound. Her mother and sister endeavoured to calm her agitation by every probable supposition they could invent, and her father tried to whistle carelessly, as if the matter was not of any importance, now and then exclaiming, ‘Don’t fret, my dear! He’ll be here in time.’

“So the hours passed away, and the morning began to break before she could be prevailed upon to retire to rest. At an early hour the bustle for the occasion commenced.

Servants were hurrying to and fro, and as they passed or met each other, the constant question of 'Is he come?' was asked, and as constantly received the negative for an answer.

"It was within an hour of the time when the ceremony was to take place, but he had not arrived. The distracted girl was dressed, and the guests were assembled in the drawing-room, wishing for her appearance. Many were the ejaculations of 'How beautiful she'll look!' 'What a lucky fellow!' and each time the door was thrown open, all eyes were bent upon it in anticipation of seeing her.

"At last, leaning upon the arm of her father, and followed by her mother and sister, the bride entered. Pale were her features, and blanched her lips, upon which a forced smile appeared, as congratulations and wishes for her continued happiness and prosperity were showered upon her. Souvenirs and flowers were presented, and all was now ready for the union.

“Fifteen minutes fled without any movement being made for an adjournment to the church, and the guests began to exchange looks of astonishment. One struck his repeater, as if by accident, and another whispered audibly, ‘Time flies fast.’ The father, finding it useless to attempt concealing the mortifying cause of their waiting any longer, with as little embarrassment as he could command, informed them of the true state of affairs.

“‘Perhaps from some mistake, or being late in town, he has gone direct to the church,’ suggested one.

“‘Very likely,’ was the reply. ‘I will drive there and see;’ and away started a gentleman in his cab.

“A slight beam of hope dispelled the darkest shadows from the mind of the poor girl, who, though silent, could not hide the distress of her feelings. The not improbable suggestion acted with the speed of electricity, and she began to think her fears groundless, when a

knock thundered at the hall-door, and the bell was pulled, as if life depended upon the violence. A murmur of voices and hurried questions were heard below. Some one rushed up the stairs, the door of the room was flung open without ceremony, and in hurried a man covered with mud from head to foot. A broken riding-whip was in his hand, and a pair of spurs speckled with blood were buckled to his heels. He had in his hand a letter. 'Which is Mr. ——?' said he, holding out the document; but, without any reply being given, it was snatched from his fingers by the father to whom it was addressed, and read aloud.

“ ‘Sir,

“ ‘I regret to inform you that your intended son-in-law (as I am given to understand) Mr. ——, met with a lamentable accident while hunting yesterday. He leaped his horse at a stone wall, which he was unable to clear, and, falling across it, the rider

was thrown violently upon his head, which produced a serious concussion of the brain, and a compound fracture of the collar-bone. Contrary to my expectations, he lived to be carried home; but I cannot give any hopes of his recovery. He has not spoken a word since the accident, and is perfectly insensible.

“ ‘Yours obediently,

“ ‘JAMES SPERLIN, M.D.’

“ Aghast each one stood at this intelligence. Not a word was spoken, but all sorrowful eyes were turned upon the bride. Not a tear fell. There she stood, muttering over the letter which she took from her father. It was taken from her; but her look was bent upon her fingers, as if still perusing it. Her sister fell upon her neck, and her mother clasped her to her bosom; but she disregarded them. Her father spoke; but she heard him not. In one brief moment her young and sanguine mind became seared and withered. The veins upon her forehead swelled, and, with a convulsive

scream, that 'It must be a dream—a horrid dream!'—she became a babbling idiot.

“For many days afterwards nothing could be learned of what she said, although she was continually talking to herself. Day and night she had no sleep, but remained in a sitting posture, rocking to and fro, and muttering to herself. Her broken-hearted friends watched in vain for a glimmering of reason to break upon her clouded mind.

“After some five days had elapsed, she proceeded to her piano, and commenced the song that you just heard, which were lines written by her intended husband. The music excited her so, that she became ungovernable; and that which should have been done at first was then decided upon by her father—I was sent for.

“Upon learning the distressing particulars of the case, I desired that she might accompany me here at once. This met with great opposition from her unhappy mother; but, know-

ing that the necessary treatment would not be followed unless under my own superintendence, I insisted upon it, and the request was acceded to. Here she has been under my peculiar care for nearly two months, and I have no doubt that a perfect cure will be effected. My chief desire has been to see her give way to her feelings as she did this morning. If she weeps till sun-set, there will be a great change for the better. The day before yesterday she asked the matron who attends upon her toilet to dress her earlier than usual. When the frock was brought that it was her custom to wear, she shook her head, and refused to have it put on. Another was brought, which she declined. All were refused until her wedding-dress was offered, when she smiled; and with sedulous care had herself arrayed as she was on the morning of the wedding. Yesterday and this morning the same desire was expressed; but, in addition, she requested a bouquet of flowers."

"Is the gentleman dead?" I inquired.

"No," replied the doctor; "contrary to all expectation, he is fast recovering."

"So he's aware of the lady's awful calamity?" said I.

"The knowledge of it would destroy him," replied he. "Quietude and messages, as if from her, have been the principal means of his probable recovery. His inquiries are constant as to 'why she does not come and see him? and why she does not write?' But hitherto the excuses made have proved satisfactory."

"How extraordinary it appears to me," said I, "that means have not been attempted to make her acquainted with this."

"Ah! sir, you don't understand the diseases of the mind," said the doctor. "If at this moment that unfortunate lady could be impressed with the truth—which I believe to be quite impossible—the revulsion of feeling would entirely destroy the brain, and no hope of a cure could be entertained."

"But when will it be tried?" I inquired.

"By degrees she is being prepared," was the reply; "and perhaps within two or three months her mind will be in a fit state to bear the intelligence, should our hopes be consummated."

"Do you permit any of her friends to see her?" asked I.

"Except you, no one has seen her since she has been under my care. I wished to see what the effect would be upon beholding the first strange face, and I was pleased to find a degree of reasoning in her discovering that you were not the person she wished to see," replied the doctor. "It was the first indication of her mind becoming restored."

We were now standing at an open casement, looking into a flower-garden. Just opposite to us was a small pond, in which a woman, humbly dressed, was looking.

"That poor woman," said the doctor, "has been here for many years. She assists in the

kitchen, and is perfectly harmless, although incurable. She is the wife of an industrious man living in the adjoining village. They had a family of three fine boys, two of which died suddenly of the scarlet fever. Within a week of their burial, the mother proceeded to a pond close to the cottage, for some water. As she was dipping her pail, she saw something just beneath the surface which attracted her attention, and, taking a wooden rake, she pulled it to the bank — it proved to be the dead body of her remaining child. A walnut-shell, with a piece of paper stuck in the centre, was floating upon the water, which, no doubt, sailing from the reach of the child, caused him to stretch for it, lose his balance, and be drowned.

“Before sun-set she was mad, raving mad, and was brought here. It is her daily custom to watch that water for a few moments just at the hour she discovered the body of her child, and then to return quietly to her work.

But, if she was not allowed to do so, which, by way of experiment, has been tried, violent fits and convulsions would follow."

"You have pronounced her incurable," said I.

"Quite so. Under superintendence," continued the doctor, "she is quiet and useful here; but without it she would be even dangerous."

While he was speaking, the mother, whose bereavement of her children had driven her mad for ever, turned upon her heel, and, with a face turned to the earth, walked slowly toward the house. As she approached, the doctor called to her, and, dropping a low curtesy, she stood looking at us.

I have seen faces whose melancholy expression might chill the blood like the keen east wind, and yet the power of sympathizing with them be very limited. But, of all that I have seen, not any have approached the one I now looked upon, in the utter absence of all life's

sunshine. Pale, ashy pale were her features. Her lips were hueless, and her eyes sunken. Her lower jaw dropped almost upon her breast, and she looked like grief personified.

"Poor creature!" exclaimed the doctor. "What wretchedness of mind is there depicted!"

"I never saw it equalled," said I.

"No wonder," replied he. "For five years a smile has not played upon her features, and, in my opinion, *never will.*"

CHAPTER VIII.

SCENES IN A MADHOUSE CONTINUED.

I now followed the doctor to the farthest end of the dreary building, and, upon knocking gently at the door of an apartment, it was opened, and we entered a darkened room. The only light permitted to steal into that lonely, cheerless place, was through the chink of the nearly closed shutters at the top of the casement. Sickly pale it struggled through, and one faint gleam of sunshine reflected on the wall looked like the hectic flush of fever on the wan cheek of the dying.

For some seconds I could not see the occupant. At length, however, my eyes became

familiarized to the darkness, and I beheld a man sitting at a table, absorbed in some occupation, the nature of which I could not discover.

"How has he been to-day?" inquired the doctor.

"Very quiet, sir," replied a voice; and, upon turning my head, I saw that another person was present who had at first escaped my notice.

After the lapse of some few minutes, and while the doctor and attendant were conferring together in an under-tone, I approached the table, and perceived a heap of nutshells sheltered by one hand of the invalid, while he was busily shaking two or three in the other, and muttering to himself something inaudible. At length he caught a glimpse of me, and, fixing his glassy, bloodshot eyes upon mine, said, "I'll set you for a million."

Returning no answer, he pushed the whole of the nutshells into the centre of the table,

and continued, "or for ten times ten million. There it is, all that I'm worth; the world's solid weight in gold. Gold! Ha, ha, ha! Gold! Ha, ha, ha! Gold we play for, doctor. Now what's the main?"

So wild and dangerous did the maniac appear, that I involuntarily retreated a step or two.

"You need not be alarmed," whispered the doctor. "He is in a harmless mood."

"Seven's the main," cried the madman — "seven's the main;" and, shaking some shells together in his clenched hand, he threw them violently on the table, and looked with eagerness as they rolled from him. "Eleven's a nick," he screamed — "eleven's a nick — ha, ha, ha!" and he continued laughing until the tears streamed down his face.

"Say not a word," observed the doctor. "You'll see a very different change presently."

In a short time the maniac again clutched the nutshells, and, casting them once more,

with a face beaming with excitement, called the same number; but, as he watched the imaginary result, his frame shivered, and a complete change of expression passed like a cloud over his features.

“Deuce ace!” murmured he—“deuce ace, and the caster’s out. My God! My God!” and, burying his face in his hands, he wept like a disappointed child. “I’m ruined,” he continued, “ruined at a throw.”

The doctor, taking me by the hand, led me from the room, and, as the keeper closed the door upon us, said, “As you may anticipate from what you’ve seen, the unfortunate person we have just left is the wreck of a gamester.”

Interested to learn the particulars of his history, I intimated my desire, and the doctor continued.

“A few words will acquaint you with it,” said he. “When of age, he became possessed of a very fine fortune, which was quickly wasted in gambling. Continuing his infa-

tuated career, notwithstanding the arguments and representations of his friends, the last guinea was at length expended. Still buoyed by the hope that fortune would turn in his favour, he borrowed various sums, until every resource was exhausted, and then, temptation being too strong for him, he hesitated not to fall back upon criminal means of administering to his fatal passion.

“ The immediate cause of his mental aberration was this. Upon one occasion, having lost all the money he had, he drew a cheque in his brother's name upon a bank where he had kept an account, but which was closed at the time of the drawing. This was cashed by some one believing the draft to be genuine, and the result was a prosecution for forgery. The verdict was ‘guilty;’ but, through the influence of friends, the sentence was only a few months' imprisonment. However, at the expiration of his punishment, his mind was discovered to be diseased, and he quitted the

walls of his prison for this asylum, where we expect him ever to remain."

We now descended the staircase, and, after winding through a long passage, came to a door with a small grating in it. To our summons a man peeped through the bars, and then threw back some heavy bolts, which clanked loudly as they fell from their sockets. We now entered a long narrow courtyard, flanked by high walls, between which the glad sunshine streamed, as if it was toying with flower and blossom, instead of the dreary pavement, on which not even a weed reared its rank and useless blade.

"These," said the doctor, pointing to a group of strange-looking persons parading up and down the confines of the yard, "are incurables. Some have been under my care for many years, others but a few months; but all will, in every human probability, continue with me until relieved by that physician who cures the ills of the mad and the sane with equal certainty."

In one corner a young man was squatting on the stones, drawing with a straw some imaginary figures, and gazing intently on the blank space, as though he saw "in his mind's eye" the production of his handicraft.

"'Tis beautiful!" he exclaimed. "'Tis very beautiful. And how like her! Ah, it fades from me!" continued he, snatching at the shadow of his own hand. "It fades, it fades," he shrieked; and then, looking for something suddenly lost, with an expression of the saddest mortification, he raised his eyes from the ground, and, clasping his hands together, appeared like one just bereft of the only joy of life remaining.

"He was an artist," observed the doctor, "and inherited the lamentable disease with which he is now afflicted. The first symptoms presented themselves in a most remarkable manner. He went to Rome for the purpose of studying his profession, and on his arrival proceeded to examine the most exqui-

site works of art. In the private collection of a distinguished nobleman, he saw the portrait of a lovely woman, and, obtaining permission to copy it, he proceeded there daily, as it was supposed, for the purpose just named. But, to the astonishment of many who observed his proceedings, not the least progress was made in his labour, although he used his pencils, and, from time to time, looked at the original, as if he was translating it to his own canvass with the delight of an enthusiast. Weeks passed away, and still the canvass upon his easel remained a blank; and it was not until the question was asked him 'when he intended to commence the work' that the mental delusion was discovered."

"Commence!" replied he. "Commence! is it not finished? Look, and say—is not the copy perfect?"

Such was the extraordinary impression upon his mind, that he believed he saw a

literal copy before him, and he continues, although three years have intervened since then, to draw this figure of imagination upon the walls of his cell, or any where else that he may chance to be.

Turning from the poor demented artist, I started with fear as I encountered the face of an old man close to mine; indeed, so close was it, that I felt the warm breath from his lips on my own.

"Hush!" said he, putting his finger up, to command silence. "Hush! I want to speak with ye alone."

I looked at the doctor, and saw his eyes fixed with a peculiar and indescribable expression upon the maniac. Without saying another word, he turned upon his heel, and left us.

"There was mischief in his mind," observed the doctor. "But we can always quiet them, and prevent any being committed."

"I shouldn't like to have complied with his wish," replied I.

“No,” returned the doctor. “He’s not a companion to enjoy a *tête-à-tête* with.”

And here, (said the narrator,) ended my first and last ramble through the precincts of a madhouse.

“Well!” remarked Mr. Wirkem, as Banbury completed his account of “Scenes in a Madhouse,” — “it takes many plums to make a *sensible* pudding, and punch can’t be made palatable with sugar and water only. We must have some acids with the sweets.”

“Very co-rect, sir,” croaked Melancholy Joey. “Very co-rect. At the best part o’ the jobs I ever was a performer at, we always had cake and wine, mopin and moppin. As I used to say,” continued Mr. Wyper, “to the lamented old governor what I drove to his last restin-place, life’s a sea-pie, sir, made up of all sorts of odds and ends, snips, snaps, and scraps, and, if so be we get a mouthful that goes agin the stomach to-day, let’s hope a tit-

bit will come and smooth the way to-morrow."

"Strike me lucky!" exclaimed John Hogg, "but that's the merriest tune I ever heard chirped from your bill. He'll warm up by an by, Mr. Wirkem, sir," continued Jack. "We shall thaw him to a moral."

"I hope, John," replied the President, with an air of dignity, "that your friend will consult his own feelings, as to the sweating of his internal or external humanity."

"To be sure, sir," replied Jack, not comprehending the sageness of his patron's remark. "And, if so be he wants a course of trainin'," continued he, squaring with his doubled fists, "I and Toddy are just ripe to show him a few fancy touches."

"I can't—say," added the ex-postboy, in a strangely thick and inarticulate voice, "how—very much—pleased I—should be (hiccup)—to—punch—Mr. Wyper's head, or," continued he, looking pompously grave, "to give him a spank (hiccup)—in the eye."

“No, no, no,” returned Mr. Wirkem, reprovingly, “we allow nothing but drops in the eye here.”

“I thought, sir,” added Toddy, “that—this was—a free an easy—where every—gen'l'man had a right—to drink—smoke or—fight—as the case might be.”

“Toddy,” said Jack, rising, as the President beckoned him to reach his hat and coat from the accustomed peg — “you're very drunk.”

“Jack,” replied that individual — “I'm (hiccup)—happy to say I am.”

CHAPTER IX.

A GREAT MISTAKE.

One night more. The club is assembled. Eyes are bright, hearts are light, and every face is glowing with the joy thrilling through each vein and heart. Oh! for some frigid, stiff-laced fool of fashion to peep at this right merry company! Then might he learn the difference between pleasure assumed and pleasure enjoyed. Then might he think of the fun and glee there is among those who bow not with their backs, nor sneer with their smiles. Then might he know the wild, uncontrolled delight of a broad, honest "ha, ha!" instead of the pursed-up simper screwed from reluctant lips.

“ Silence for the President,” hallooed Bill Johnson, rapping the table with his knuckles. “ Silence, if you please. Silence.”

The busy hum of many voices, the din and chink from countless glasses, were stilled, and Mr. Wirkem rose from his chair of state with more than ordinary dignity, to essay a speech. He pressed his two fore-fingers on the table, and, looking for a short half-dozen seconds at each of his digits, as if there were a few notes pencilled in miniature on the nails, he coughed twice as a preliminary, and with this introduction commenced.

“ Mr. Vice-president and gentlemen — no man can have a greater dislike than I have to long-winded, rigmarole yarns ; and I believe no one here can charge me with creeping up a hill of any length, so as to tire his patience.”

“ Certainly not,” remarked Tom Short. “ I’m witness to that.”

“ Tired !” whispered John Hogg to himself. “ I could hear ye in preference to the dinner-call.”

“ Not having lost the favour of my passengers by a heavy drag,” resumed Mr. Wirkem, “ I shall not begin, so late in the day, to run the risk of any such conveyance now. In requesting your attention, therefore, for a proposition I have to make, dismiss from your minds all ideas of a prosy lecture; but give me your heads — like thorough-breds — willingly.”

Loud cries of “ We will, we will.”

“ We’ve drunk many a toast and many a sentiment since we have met together in this old room,” continued the President. “ Healths, kind wishes, and all sorts of fair excuses for fair bumpers have been given; but there is one thing which seems to have escaped our recollection,” said Mr. Wirkem, shaking his head sorrowfully, “ and that is the memory of, metaphorically speaking, *the Road*.”

John Hogg groaned in anguish at the thought of the great departed.

“ Yes, gentlemen,” resumed the President,

“ I feel it a duty, although a mournful one, to propose one glass to that which we must ever remember with a sort of chameleon skin of pain and pleasure—pain for what it is, and pleasure for what it was. In becoming silence we will, if you please, drink to ‘ the immortal memory of THE ROAD.’ ”

Upstanding, the members quaffed to this reminiscence of the past; and, after the tribute of respect was paid, each took his chair again, and became, for some few seconds, silent and thoughtful.

After a pause, the serious expression clouding the features of Mr. Wirkem gave way, and again the smiles of good-humour and gaiety spread themselves from the roll of fat, yclept a double chin, to his high and frosted brow.

“ It’s no use fretting,” observed he, rubbing his broad palms together, and settling himself comfortably in his chair, “ none in the world. Come, Dick, my lad, set the ball rolling.”

“ I must reflect before I make my choice,”

replied Banbury. "I'm like a child in a pastrycook's shop, bewildered with the sweets before me."

At this moment Melancholy Joey rose from his seat and left the room.

"I can't help a-thinkin'," whispered one-eyed Jack to his friend Toddy, "but that old file is up to somethin more than usual to-night."

"What are you insinerwatin?" inquired the ex-postboy.

"I've been watching him ever since he came," replied Jack.

"For what?" said Toddy.

"I've known him for many a year," returned John Hogg; "but, till this evening, never saw him with a clean shirt on. *That* was the first object that hatched my suspicion of his being up to no good."

"If his linen wasn't yellor," rejoined Toddy, "his phiz was plaguy smutty."

"Not more so than usual," added Jack.

“ And mark my words,” continued he, “ there’s a mystery about Joey’s clean shirt which time’ll unravel.”

“ It may be so,” said the ex-postboy ; “ but, for my part, I don’t see any riddle in a feller’s changin his under-garment.”

“ You’re a feelosopher enough to see a thing when it’s right clear afore ye,” rejoined one-eyed Jack. “ But I’ll be bless’d if you can if it’s a *leetle* foggy.”

“ Oh ! yes, I can,” returned Toddy, giving a knowing shake with his head, and winking his left eye. “ Oh ! yes, I can, though ; and, if my time was to come over agin—”

“ Ah !” interrupted Mr. Wirkem, “ if our time was to come over again, how we should *save our ha’pence !*”

“ I wouldn’t, Mr. Wirkem, sir,” replied John Hogg, recklessly. “ I wouldn’t ; not even a single brown. No,” continued he, deliberately, “ ‘ let us live while we may,’ is my motto ; and when we can’t—damn me—”

"John, John," rejoined the President, "be merry and wise. Imprudence is generally closely tracked by sore repentance."

"That's a hound that never gave tongue to my drag," returned Jack. "I *wouldn't* be sorry if I wished to be. I've a soul," continued he, proudly, "above a vun-oss chay!"

"Give me pluck against any thing," added Mr. Wirkem. "Blood will beat bone all the earth over. At the same time, John, there's a vast gap between cool courage and bull-headed, reckless daring."

Mr. Wyper had now been absent some time, and, although the door through which he made his exit creaked and jarred upon its hinges occasionally, as if some one was about making an entry, nobody appeared. At length, after many furtive glances, John Hogg's curiosity became roused beyond bearing. Impatience could brook delay no longer. Rising from his pail, he, without being noticed by the general assembly, stole on tiptoe towards the door,

and, as he neared it within a few feet, he leant his head forwards, and stopped to listen to some sounds that caught his ear. Toddy alone noticed his movements by a cunning sheep's-eye turned towards that quarter, and, although he might seem to a careless observer to be engaged in a close examination of the map-streaked lines on the smoked and dingy ceiling, he was watching his friend's proceeding with ill-concealed interest and inquisitiveness.

Slowly and cautiously as a sly grimalkin about to pounce upon some unhappy mouse, one-eyed Jack approached the door, now swinging to and fro from some unseen power, and taking advantage of the open movement, he darted his head forward, and for a second—a brief second—became a spectator of the scene behind. It was but a peep; the mere shadow of a look. But never, perhaps, did so brief an observation cause such wonderful and inexplicable results.

Quicker than words can describe, Jack turned upon his heel and hastened back, on the ends of his toes, towards his pail. Palpable effects of suppressed laughter were in his starting eye. His cheeks were swollen, and a redness was diffused over his entire countenance, which rivalled the charred and red-hot cinders in the grate. Pursed and firmly closed were his lips, and altogether he seemed charged and primed, and ready to go off with a roar.

“I shall bust!” exclaimed he, bumping himself upon his hard, resisting seat, and, placing his hands to his aching sides, he gave vent, in smothered sounds, to the pent up-mirth within. “I shall bust!” repeated he, rolling with the extreme violence of his cachinnatory powers.

“Why, what’s the matter?” inquired the President, in much surprise.

“Have you seen anything particular?”

said Toddy, about going on a similar expedition.

"Stop," returned Jack. "Don't stir an inch; not so much as a barley-corn."

"What is the joke?" asked Mr. Wirkem. "Come, John, we ought to be sharers in it, ye know."

"You shall, Mr. Wirkem, sir, you shall," replied he, "only let me ease it off a little, that's all, and don't disturb him."

"*Him!*" exclaimed the President; "who?"

One-eyed Jack could merely point with his thumb to the door at the end of the room, and continue his laugh.

"Don't come the monkey, all grins and grimaces," observed Toddy, losing his temper, and being worked to the finest possible degree of curiosity to have the cause divulged for his friend's unusual and mysterious conduct.

This abrupt observation acted like a copious infusion of water to a glass of strong grog. John Hogg's mirth became weaker by twenty

degrees, and in a very short time he was capable of saying :

“Truss me tenderly ! but I thought he didn’t put on a clean shirt for nothin.”

“Then what did he put it on for?” asked the ex-postboy.

“Mr. Wirkem, sir, and gentlemen,” said Jack, addressing the assembly after the fashion of his betters, “I had my misgivins as to a trifle extraordinary connected with Melancholy Joey to-night. I had an eye—seein that I couldn’t have two, more’s the pity—upon his movements, not from any fear of his committin hisself, but more just to find out what he put on a clean shirt for. And I’ve found it out,” continued he, looking round the table with a look of portentous consequence.

There was a long break. Every eye was turned on the speaker, and all appeared most anxious for the *denouément*.

“I’ve found it out,” repeated Jack. “Mr.

Wirkem, sir, bless'd if Melancholy Joey ain't a-courtin a gal behind that door!"

A shout—an uproarious shout—followed this declaration. Every one leaped from his seat and was rushing to the spot where the unfortunate Mr. Wyper was to be detected in soft dalliance with his "ladye love," when a loud authoritative "stop" arrested one and all at the same moment. The mandate was from the President.

"Chair, chair," called Bill Johnson. "Support the chair, gentlemen, support the chair."

"Hear me," hallooed Mr. Wirkem, passing his dexter hand for silence and attention. "There are some few things in this world," said he, "above all others, which forbid the interference of any save those that are immediately interested; and I *do* think the circumstance of kissing a girl behind a door to be about the leader in the team. Let me ask how would any of ye feel when a third pair of eyes were discovered prying at such a little

weakness, to which human nature is so prone? No, no, gentlemen," continued the old coachman; "keep your seats. Deal unto others as you would be dealt by, and let Mr. Wyper alone with his amour."

"A *moor*! no—no—Mr. Wirkem, sir—not so bad as all that, neither!—I didn't say as ow the girl was a black-a-moor."

"I should like just to have a peep, Dick," observed Jacob Plywel.

"That would be *just* doing what you ought not," replied the President. "Never go off the track of strict propriety when convinced of the error of the turn."

"Well, well!" rejoined Jacob, "as it's against the law, of course we must obey."

With this, Jacob resumed his seat, and all followed his example.

Scarcely was order restored, and John Hogg's echoing laugh concluded, when Melancholy Joey made his appearance. His features were certainly red, and bore a very

different hue to their general complexion ; but there was a conscious, cool, and almost infantine innocence of expression upon his face, which could scarcely be reconciled to the fluttering ordeal stated to have been so lately passed by him. Without a perceptible emotion of any sort, Mr. Wyper proceeded to take possession of his straight-backed, rush-bottomed chair ; but hardly had his nether man touched it, when a simultaneous and deafening roar of laughter saluted his ears from everybody present. Even Mr. Wirkem could control his gravity no longer. Sinking into his capacious seat, he became convulsed with mirth, and his laugh was heard far above that of the rest of this noisy crew.

Melancholy Joey looked like one suddenly let through some faulty ice. His nose changed to a doubtful blue, with astonishment. Each particular hair rose from its horizontal position, and stood fearfully perpendicular. Turning his wonder-struck eyes upon the company,

he looked the query his tongue refused to utter, "What is this all about?" But, nobody paying any attention to his silent appeal, he directed his attention—feeling that he was the witless object of the fun—to his own person, expecting to discover some disarrangement of attire, or other cause for laughter. Carefully he regarded, as far as he was capable, each tie and button; all was right, and no darn had broken from its tender meshes. What then was there more than common in him, to occasion so much satirical hilarity? and again he petitioned with his dull, fishy eyes for an explanation; but with the like success.

If there was a pale, thin, lingering supposition in Mr. Wyper's brain that the effects he witnessed might be caused by some nutty joke cracked in his absence, it was entirely dissipated by one-eyed Jack's rudely thrusting his finger pointedly at him, and exclaiming, "You're a pretty tit!"

"Pretty tit!" repeated Melancholy Joey.
"And pray what am I a pretty tit for?"

"Oh, oh!" said Toddy, "come, come. If you don't know well enough, I *should* like to know who does."

"I gave ye credit for more prudence, tact, and skill, Mr. Wyper," observed the President, "than to submit yourself to such an attack—an attack, sir," continued he, "which would have been carried to—" and he pointed significantly to the door.

"Be more cautious for the future," remarked Tom Short. "Remember, doors, even 'doors have ears,' and tongues too—for they creak sometimes."

"Such a strange place I never heard of before," remarked Jacob Plywel, "for an appointment of so delicate a nature."

"It was his pride, you may be sure," said Bill Johnson. "He wished us to know he had a sweetheart."

"But what a place to exchange royal salutes in!" said Mr. Wirkem.

"It wasn't the woman's choice, I'll be bound," added one-eyed Jack.

"Woman's choice!" exclaimed Melancholy Joey, with his eyes ready to start from their sockets. "Woman's choice!" repeated he. "May I ask what all this means? For may I be a mute for life if I know."

Here there were vociferous cries of "Oh, oh! No soft sawder. Grease your wheels, and on we go!"

"Please, sir," said Mr. Wyper, drawing a cuff of his coat across the tip of his nose and lips, and distilling a briny tear from the united efforts of both his eyes—"please, Mr. Wirkem, what have I done?"

"Really," replied the President, "really you must be the best judge of that. I feel quite at a loss to say myself."

"Have I been making a ass of myself, sir?" asked Melancholy Joey, with genuine simplicity.

"I hope not — I fervently hope not," returned the President.

“Then what have I been a-doin of?” said Mr. Wyper, almost with a sob of vexation.

“It’s very extraordinary,” replied the President, “that you should persist in the question. But, since you are decided upon having a reply, I will give ye one.”

“Do, pray do,” rejoined Joey.

“Your friend, then, John Hogg, who is grinning there as if his head was making a split vote,” returned Mr. Wirkem, “discovered you—how I know not, but perchance inadvertently—behind that door, paying some delicate attentions—in other language, pouring sweet-savoured words into the ear—or as some folk call it—”

“A-courtin a gal,” interrupted one-eyed Jack.

No sooner were these magic words uttered, than the spell was broken. An instant change took place in Mr. Wyper’s demeanour. Not sparks of indignation, but the dying embers of some such passion, were reflected in

his eyes. His brows became knit, and the flush of honest rage was spread from chin to forehead. Rising abruptly from his seat, he ejaculated, "I deny your premises. I deny the fact. I court a gal!" continued he, and his nose curled with wounded pride. "No, a woman was never pressed to this buzzum. I disdain the sex; from the oldest to the chit in long clothes."

"Do you mean to say that you wasn't billin and cooin behind that door?" said John Hogg, directing his friend to the locality.

"I do," replied Mr. Wyper, firmly. "I never went behind a door for any such purpose in all my born days. No," continued he, putting his right hand on the left of his breast; "this heart can never be charged with makin love, or any such frothy suds. I scorn the whole solemnity!"

John Hogg's good-humour began to get ruffled at this stout denial. He surveyed Melancholy Joey from heel to head, with a por-

tentious and scrutinizing look, and then said in a somewhat savage voice—

“Do you mean to say I’m not to put faith in my eyes? Didn’t I see ye a-rubbin your head against a female’s behind that—”

“No !” thundered Mr. Wyper.

“Then what were you a-kissin and nosin of?” said Jack.

“*A jack-towel*,” replied Melancholy Joey. “That was all, sirs ; a simple jack-towel. I thought,” continued he, “my face felt a shade or two grubbier than usual, and therefore I went to give it *a dry-rub*.”

The mystery was now solved, and the laugh turned against one-eyed Jack, who, in his hurried glance, mistook “the club towel” for one of the softer sex !

“I should never have thought of the hand-cloth,” grumbled he, “and no one else that knows him ; for he never washes hisself by any chance.”

The gravity of the members being partially

restored, the President proposed that Banbury should make his selection for the next call, and the regular proceedings be gone on with at once.

"I'll give my suffrage then to you, Dick," returned Banbury. "We can't do better, I think, than have one of your tales to wind up the night with."

"Never spur a willing oss," replied the President. "I've worked double turns, remember, and there are many here who haven't had a breather."

"Fudge, fudge!" exclaimed Bill Johnson.

"We know that you can pull; so go to the collar like a Briton."

If truth must be told, Mr. Wirkem was much fonder of being actively engaged than passively listening to the pleasing attempts of his companions. Indeed, his own voice possessed charms to him not to be discovered in any other, and therefore his expressed reluctance was but so much assumed modesty.

“Well ! if I’m overruled—of course,” and knocking his brow twice with his open hand, as if tapping a fresh butt of thought, he thus began.

CHAPTER X.

THE STOUT GENTLEMAN.

It was about three months before I drove the old Regulator on its last journey, (said Mr. Wirkem,) that, as usual, just as the last stroke of eight fell, I grasped the ribands and climbed my box.

“Now then,” cried that John Hogg there, “coachman’s ready, sir.”

“Who is it?” inquired I.

“The box-seat,” replied he, “a-swallowin his breakfast in number nine.”

“Go and draw him out,” rejoined I, as the osses wanted to be off like so many trapped pigeons.

"He's too heavy a badger for a pup like me," said Jack. "Howsomever, I'll give him another whistle," and again the "now then" echoed through every room and corner of this old inn.

To the second summons the passenger made his appearance with a round of buttered toast in one hand, a half-finished hard egg in the other, and his jaws carrying a full load of invisibles.

I've seen a great many heavy ones in my "life and times;" but never clapped eyes on such a sack of human flesh before or since. *I'm* not a little shaving; but I'm a mere *circumstance*—a feather weight compared to him. He stood not an inch less than six feet, and looked about as broad as he was long. His cheeks dropped, like a hound's jowl, with fat, and if his salvation depended on seeing his toes, he would have been booked to the devil without a hope of escape.

"I'm coming, coachy," said he, making

a bolt of the load inside, and refilling with the remainder of the egg and the slice of toast.

"Be careful, sir," said Jack, holding the ladder on the near-side, and winking his eye at me, "there's one or two of the steps rather weak uns."

"Which are they?" inquired the stout gentleman, hastily clearing the remainder of his breakfast.

"You'll not be able to sit comfortably alongside of me, sir," observed I, as he wheeled himself up.

"Why not?" asked he, with a broad, good-natured grin.

"There's not too many, but too *much* of us," returned I.

"Never fear, coachy," added he. "We shall manage with a squeeze."

"Pray, sir," said Jack, with one of his impudent leers, "couldn't you manage to send your belly by the wan?"

"Ah! that was *after* pocketing the bob he gave me," chimed in John Hogg.

"It was," said Mr. Wirkem. "The fat traveller," continued he, "laughed heartily at this observation, and, ramming himself into the seat, exclaimed, 'All right.'

"Hold fast. Let go their heads," cried I. Off flew the cloths, and away we went clattering down the yard as if every flint would bleed again.

The stout gentleman was exceedingly talkative. We were scarcely free of the stones when he had given his opinion concerning all sorts of subjects, persons, and things in general. At last, feeling perhaps at a loss for matter to treat of, he turned his attention to himself.

"I dare say, coachy," said he, "that you haven't seen many men of greater bulk than myself."

"Not one, sir, to my recollection," replied I.

"So I expected," rejoined he. "I hoped such would be your reply. For I'd have ye know that I'm proud of the distinction which my fat confers."

"Like most distinctions, though," observed I, "you must feel the weight of it irksome now and then."

"I do," replied he, "particularly in hot, daggy weather. It's also inconvenient," he continued, "in many ways. Sometimes, when I beckon a cab from the rank, the driver shakes his head and points to the springs. If I hail an omnibus, no sooner is my umbrella hoisted than the cad shouts, 'move on, Jim, here comes the fat un.' In narrow, crowded thoroughfares I'm looked upon as a positive obstruction and public nuisance. In Cheapside, one day, I happened to stop to look at a picture-shop, when a policeman said to me, just as he would to the driver of a heavy waggon, 'Come, move on, you sir. We can't have the street blocked up to please *your* fancy.' I never could travel

by the mail in all my life ; all the guards made some objection to my luggage, even if I carried but a small brown paper parcel. 'It won't do,' they used to say, 'it won't do. We can't keep our time with so much luggage in the fore-boot. You were no more made for a mail than a female.' When I go to a theatre, or any other place of public amusement, first I'm asked to sit 'this way,' then 'a little more that,' until I'm screwed into all manner of shapes, and there I am, perhaps, at last, sitting with my back to the stage, squinting out of the corners of my eyes in the most uncomfortable manner possibly to be imagined. But, notwithstanding these drawbacks, I glory in my superior specific gravity over the rest of my fellow-creatures. There's a joy which all stout men feel in glancing at their shadows in the sun, which thin ones have not the capacity of entertaining. We are compelled to assume an air of dignity in our gait, and the very assumption instils the feeling. Oh, yes !

coachy, you may rest assured if a man of discreet years wishes to be on superlatively good terms with himself—which is the most desirable affection that he can foster—he must cultivate an unbounded stomach.”

“I agree with you, sir,” replied I, “that a solid portly man is more English-looking, and consequently more to my taste, than your cadaverous, bloodless, transparent, vinegar-fed, milk-an-water, doughy, ill-bred, foreignish-looking varmint.”

“To be sure he is,” rejoined the stout gentleman. “To be sure he is. And, as to which of the two is the most comfortable to himself, I can answer from experience.”

“Were you ever a lean un, then?” inquired I.

“As Romeo’s poison-vender,” replied he. “Indeed, he was a well-fed citizen, compared to what I was three years since.”

“How did you come to pick up so?” asked I.

“It’s a singular story,” returned the fat traveller, smiling, “but not a very long one.”

Observing that “I should like to hear it,” he said,

“With all my heart! Not long since I was, as I am now, in good healthy condition, both in body and mind. When I put my heel upon a daisy, there was full two and twenty stone upon the flower; which I consider to be good honest weight for a man in the prime of his days. Few individuals, if any, put more good food under their waistcoats, drank more good brown ale, thought less, slept more, and laughed louder and longer than I did. But change is the essence of the mutable laws which govern all things pertaining to humanity. If we do not of ourselves ‘work the oracle,’ that which we term chance—mis-called destiny—is certain to effect it.

“For some time I had been lodging at a ‘genteel boarding-house’—as it was described in the advertisements when vacancies occurred

—in the New Road. Like most such places in such localities, it was occupied by bankers' clerks, medical students, old maids, widows with very small means, a respectable single gentleman or two, and an adventurer with large moustaches, broken English, and limited wardrobe. This individual was the lion of the establishment, until it was discovered that his estates in Hungary returned so very small a rent-roll, and that neither the landlady nor the laundress could extract the amount of their respective claims, notwithstanding the superlative excellence of their elocutionary powers in the art of dunning.

“ I had been an inmate of this menagerie for little more than a twelvemonth, when an eccentric-looking mysterious person came to fill up ‘ a vacancy ’ recently caused by the Hungarian landholder being taken to a residence for pauper debtors in Whitecross Street. He was a tall slim individual, bearing the appearance of having been starved upon principle

from the hour of his birth. Pale, meagre, and sunk were his jaws, which elongated to a point, and his neck was scraggy, and little less than an impoverished heron's. His eyes were set close together, and were as black and glowing and twinkling as a snake's when contemplating the seizure of some unsuspecting frog, croaking his love to his mate in the summer's sun. Bald and polished as oiled mahogany was his flat and compressed head, while a few straight long bristles were carefully combed from the back, and brought over the ears. A straight line chalked upon a slate would faithfully describe his figure. From his contracted narrow shoulders to his protruding heels, there was no deviation from the perpendicular. All was even. Round his throat a small leather stock was buckled, so that the ends did not meet behind, and his costume was always black, from head to foot.

"For some days after his arrival, I knew nothing more of the new comer than that he

was addressed as Doctor Doo. At the table he was very silent, and, as it was my custom to retire to my private room after dinner to discuss my bottle, I had but little of his conversation or society.

“Some three weeks had elapsed since his becoming my fellow-boarder, when I noticed that every body in the house, more especially the ladies, began to appear excessively unwell. None of them could eat, and all looked white, thin, and low-spirited. I inquired of one or two what occasioned this change, and received for a reply, that ‘they were under the advice of Doctor Doo.’”

“‘The sooner you’re from under it the better, then,’ rejoined I, ‘if I can judge from appearances.’

“‘You’ll think differently soon,’ said my fair informants. ‘Ah, sir!’ sighed they, ‘do consult Doctor Doo.’

“‘Thank ye,’ returned I; ‘but, while I continue as I am, I’ll take no advice to improve my health.’

“One evening I was sitting comfortably alone before a cheerful fire in my own snugery. A bottle of fine old port wine was my only companion, and there it stood on the table, close to my elbow, with its crimson blood sparkling in the blaze — temptation personified. I had just drawn the cork, and was gurgling the first, the maiden glass, from the grey cobwebbed neck of the black bottle, when a gentle tap was heard at the door of my apartment.

“ ‘Come in,’ said I, surprised at the interruption.

“ The door opened, and in stalked Doctor Doo.

“ ‘Pardon this intrusion,’ observed he, bowing and smiling; ‘but I have something to communicate which will not bear longer procrastination.’

“ ‘Pray be seated,’ replied I, offering him a chair. ‘I shall be glad to hear any thing you may have to say.’

“ ‘ You’re very stout, sir,’ said the doctor, occupying a chair on the opposite side of the table.

“ ‘ I am, thank God,’ replied I. ‘ Will you take a glass of wine, doctor?’

“ He waved his hand. ‘ Not for worlds, sir,’ rejoined he. ‘ It is to warn you from such poison that I have intruded upon your privacy. *Delay is death !*’

“ These three last words were delivered in the most solemn and deliberate manner.

“ ‘ Delay is death !’ repeated I, more amazed than alarmed.

“ ‘ And no mistake,’ added he.

“ ‘ What do, what *can* you mean, sir?’ asked I.

“ ‘ The ægis of friendship,’ returned the doctor, ‘ is the only protector from destruction or injury. I’ve come here this evening to place my shield between you and sudden, premature decease.’

“ ‘ Good God, sir !’ I exclaimed, ‘ am I going to be assassinated?’

“‘ You are,’ coolly replied he.

“‘ Heaven protect me ! By whom, and for what ?’

“‘ The doctor smiled. ‘ By your own hand,’ he replied.

“‘ ‘ Faugh ! pooh, pooh !’ returned I. ‘ Not while good English roast beef and ——.’

“‘ ‘ I know what you would say,’ interrupted the doctor. ‘ But listen. It is the good cheer — as it ignorantly is termed — which kills seven-tenths of the population of this country. Where one dies of starvation—and I believe a few do yield their immaterial spirits to mingle with the thinner air, by the necessitous code of total abstinence — ninety and nine go off from eating and drinking to excess. It has been my pleasing and self-imposed duty for some years past to study the preventives for cutting short the thread of life, and I feel a conscious pride in being able to say that my arduous labours have been crowned with success. These pills,’

continued he, taking a box from his waistcoat pocket, 'are composed of a powerfully cathartic, but innoxious vegetable. Take them, sir, from the hand of a disinterested friend. I take no fees. My only reward is the pleasure of plucking the falling man from the yawning abyss. I know, from my professional observation, that the lease of your life is nearly run out. Take a dozen of those pills night and morning, and, when they are expended, come to me for more. If you are not a very different man at the end of one little month to what you are now, say, sir, that I'm no judge of physic.'

" 'But, doctor,' replied I, expostulating, 'I never felt better in my life. Why should I take physic?'

" 'By the same rule that the mariner furls his sails before the storm bursts,' replied he. 'Medicine, sir, should be taken more frequently as a preventive than by way of cure.'

" 'That may be very true,' rejoined I.

‘ But, as far as I am concerned, I see no reason for fear. I’m just as I’ve been for the last fourteen years.’

“ ‘ Do not flatter yourself that, because the danger *has* not appeared, it *will* not,’ added the doctor. ‘ I beg now to apprise you that the germs of apoplexy are about to spring. Be warned in time. Leave off animal food, beer, wine, and spirits, and stick to the pills. Delay is death !’

“ Now he chanced,” continued the stout gentleman, “ to strike the only vulnerable point in my constitution. I had often thought, with some degree of trembling, that I might be a likely subject for apoplexy, and after some more conversation, and a great deal of reflection, I determined to follow his advice.

“ Heaven knows that Doctor Doo had not underrated the powers of his physic. In three weeks I had no more stomach than a deal-board. Weak at the knees, pale as a peeled turnip, and so debilitated that I could

not sit upright in my chair, I began to think it high time to change the system, and told the doctor so.

“ ‘No, no, no,’ returned he. ‘The desirable effects are just perceptible. Stick to the plan I laid down for ye, and in a few days you’ll never be liable to a fit of apoplexy as long as you live.’

“ ‘Then I must keep to my bed,’ said I. ‘For I can scarcely crawl either out of it or into it now.’

“ ‘Do so,’ added the doctor. ‘The more repose the better.’

“Four long, weary days I remained in bed, so attenuated that I could hardly turn myself from side to side. Every figure and flower upon the curtains I counted over and over again in my lonely hours, and speculated, as they drew themselves lazily along, upon the joys that awaited me upon receiving permission to live again.

“I had been dreaming of rich, thick turtle

soup, haunches of venison, fattened capons, and things of such kind, when I was suddenly awoke by a familiar voice, crying, 'Sleep no more. Wake and eat.'

"I opened my eyes to the sound, and there by my bedside stood an apparition, holding a large tray loaded with a rump-steak, smothered with onions, a quartern loaf of new bread, a quart pot of frothing stout, and a bottle of ruby-bright port-wine.

" 'Am I asleep—Do I dream?' said I.

" 'No,' replied the voice, which I now recognized as belonging to my kind-hearted, loquacious landlady. 'No, Mr. Brown,' added she, 'you've been asleep long enough, so have I, and nearly every one of my boarders besides.'

" 'What do you mean, ma'am?' asked I, sticking a fork into the savoury dish, and commencing a demolition of the dainties.

" 'First of all, finish every morsel that I've brought ye,' replied she, 'and then I'll astonish you with a bit of news.'

“ ‘ What will the doctor say, ma’am ? ’ I inquired.

“ ‘ *Doctor !* ’ exclaimed the landlady. ‘ A pretty kind of doctor, indeed ! His object,’ continued she, ‘ was to kill every body in the house.’

“ ‘ *Kill* every body in the house ! ’ repeated I, stopping in the act of draining the pot.

“ ‘ Ah, sir ! ’ sighed she, ‘ I little thought what a viper I’d got under my roof.’

“ ‘ Explain yourself, ma’am,’ returned I.

“ ‘ You’ll eat no more when I have,’ added she.

“ ‘ I can’t as it is,’ said I. ‘ My powers of gastronomy are sadly impaired.’

“ ‘ ‘Tis well they are not beyond tinkering,’ replied the landlady. ‘ It was intended to render ’em so. For the sham doctor was nothing more nor less than—’

“ ‘ What ? ’ said I.

“ ‘ *A sleeping partner in an undertaker’s.*’

“ ‘ Good God ! ’ exclaimed I. ‘ Cadging for business ? ’

“ The landlady nodded.

“ It was true enough, coachy,” observed the stout gentleman ; “ such was the object of the self-dubbed Doctor Doo.”

CHAPTER XI.

“ A-caddin for subjects !” exclaimed Melancholy Joey. “ Ha, ha, ha !—I shall die a-larfin.”

And the complete exhaustion of air from his collapsed lungs seemed to justify the supposition that such might be the terminus of Mr. Wyper's existence.

“ There's a image, Mr. Wirkem, sir,” observed one-eyed Jack, pointing to his friend. “ I never seed such a figure afore.”

“ It's singular,” observed the President, after receiving the thanks of the company for his story, “ that excess of mirth produces similar effects to those of sorrow. Tears are the results in either case.”

"They are, indeed," replied Bill Johnson. "You never see a woman extraordinarily tickled but she's sure to cry. And if so be she gets a rub, out oozes the salt water."

"But Melancholy Joey ain't a woman," returned John Hogg; "that is to say, not in one sense, and yet he may be in another."

"If cryin be a sign-post," observed Toddy, "I *should* like to know where there's a *whiter*?"

"Give him my mackintosh," said Jacob Plywel. "He'll saturate his buzzum else."

Such were the fleeting remarks upon Mr. Wyper's indulgence, perchance for the first time in his life, in a hearty roar. The cause being purely professional, he enjoyed the relish far more than the rest of his associates, and the novelty of the affair seemed to strike him as being peculiarly interesting and facetious.

"He ought to have succeeded," observed he, mopping up the tears with the skirt of his

coat. "Such a man as that should never want for jobs. I could almost give up the ghost myself, with pleasure, rather than he should be at a stand-still."

"Joey," replied one-eyed Jack, "tip us your fin. I love a feller to stick to his sawder. There's nothin like backin your friends in need. One good turn," continued he, "is sure to bring another."

"There are exceptions even to that rule," observed Mr. Wirkem. "I've known people, after meeting with many a good turn, when their turns came to make a return, turn their backs upon their former friends."

"That's too often the case," added the Vice-president.

"All through my life," observed Toddy, "my back has been frontin my friends; but not one," said he, emphatically, "ever got the cold shoulder. No, no, I can't be chalked for a mean un."

"I don't believe ye can, old feller," replied

one-eyed Jack. "If it was the last tizzy in the pouch, I think you'd split it with a pal."

The ex-postboy seemed deeply affected with this kind remark. His under-lip quivered, and he looked at his old top-boots with the damp of tenderness brightening his eyes.

"Let's have a song," said the President.
"It's too late for another story."

"What is the time?" inquired Tom Short.

"Within a bunch of minutes to twelve," replied Mr. Wirkem, looking at his watch.
"Come, Jacob, we've had a touch of your quality before, and liking the sort," continued he, "tune up another stave for us."

"Then, without a jib—as what must be must," returned Jacob Plywel—"here's off."

One day Goodbye met How-d'ye-do,
Too near to shun saluting;
But soon the rival sisters flew
From kissing to disputing.

“ Away!” says How-d’ye-do ; “ your mien
Appals my cheerful nature ;
No name so sad as yours is seen
In Sorrow’s nomenclature.

“ Whene’er I give one sunshine hour,
Your cloud comes o’er to shade it ;
Whene’er I plant one bosom flower,
Your mildew drops to fade it.

“ Ere How-d’ye-do has tun’d each tongue
To Hope’s delighted measure,
Goodbye in Friendship’s ear has rung
The knell of parting pleasure.

“ From sorrows past my chemic skill
Draws smiles of consolation,
While you from present joys distil
The tears of separation.”

Goodbye replied—“ Your statement’s true,
And well your case you’ve pleaded ;
But pray who’d think of How-d’ye-do,
Unless Goodbye preceded ?”

“ That’s an old un, Jacob,” observed Mr.
Wirkem, upon the conclusion of the song.

“ Yes, Dick, it is,” replied Jacob. “ The bean is out of its tooth.”

“ None the worse for that,” added the Vice-president. “ Old wine, old friends, and old songs for me, against any of the new kind.”

“ Let’s drink to that sentiment,” said Mr. Wirkem.

“ Here’s to old wine, old friends, and good old songs !” continued he, draining his glass.

Hark ! Yes, that was the iron tongue of midnight. Countless clanging clocks echoed the hour famed in tale and story for sprites’ wanderings and shuddering deeds. The President heard the summons, and with his wonted punctuality regarded it.

“ Give me my hat and coat,” said he.

“ Here they are, Mr. Wirkem, sir,” replied John Hogg, lifting them from the long-used peg, and assisting his patron to furl himself within the complicated mass of capes.

“ That’s right, warm, and comfortable,” observed he, giving a shake by way of a final

settlement. "And now, one and all, good-night."

The club-room was soon thinned, and in a few minutes all had left it, except Mr. Wyper, Toddy, and one-eyed Jack. These three cronies remained some time after the departure of the others, pondering over the last dregs in their glasses, and watching the dying cinders in the grate.

"I wish Saturday night came oftener," observed Toddy, in a voice which proclaimed the addled state of his brain. "I do, really."

"Ah!" sighed Melancholy Joey. "I wish I could sleep the other six."

"I do," added Jack, "and dream of the seventh, day and night."

CHAPTER XII.

ON MEN AND THINGS.

“I remember a queer little codger,” observed one-eyed Jack, in an early stage of the club meeting on the succeeding night, “who lived in the alley I was bred in, and was called the lawyer; and what do you think, Mr. Wirkem, sir, he was called the lawyer for?”

“Can’t say, I’m sure, John,” replied the President, clearing his mouth of a capacious sip from his glass.

“Because,” rejoined John, and a spark of electric humour glistened in his solitary organ of vision as he spoke, “because he got

his livin by *pluckin live geese of their feathers.*"

"Good," returned Mr. Wirkem, while the palpable effects of the inward cachinnatory explosion were visible in the shakes of his long-skirted waistcoat.

"I've always looked upon a lawyer," added the Vice-president, "as a very cross-grained breed—something between an-out-an-out rogue and a dandy Jemmy of a thief."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Wirkem, "a sort of hybrid, badly parented on both sides."

"There's no good in the whole lot of 'em," remarked Bill Johnson. "I was a witness once in a chaunting horse-dealing case, and you'd hardly believe it, sirs—because I wanted to speak the truth, a chap, as much like a young owl in old feathers as any thing else very ugly, tried to wheedle me into telling a lie; and, as that wouldn't do, blustered, and put himself into a passion, concluding a long rigmarole yarn, by saying :—

“A pretty witness you are, Mr. Johnson ! I should like to know which side the bed *you* sleep on.”

“Should you, sir ?” replied I ; “perhaps my old woman could give ye a more satisfactory answer than myself, particularly as I’m not believed.”

“If I’d been the judge,” added Mr. Wirkem, leaning forward in his chair, and looking profoundly grave, “I should have called that chirping counsellor to order. Darn my stockings,” continued the old coachman, “if that question was a modest one.”

“So *I* think,” observed John Hogg. “But with all respect to you, Mr. Wirkem, sir,” continued he, “I’m not dainty sweet on your over-nice folks. Those creeturs that purse up their mouths, and look as though butter wouldn’t melt in ’em, are generally full o’ wice, and a little over. I *have* heard say, where there’s a great deal o’ warnish, you mustn’t expect *three* coats o’ paint.”

"That's a great truth," replied the President, admiringly, "a very great truth; and, although I never heard it before, John, I've always thought a shine and a glitter doubtful signs of the substance."

"Talking of modesty," remarked Tom Short, "there was one of the most remarkable extreme cases I ever heard of took place in Cheltenham a few years since."

"And what was that?" inquired Jacob Plywel.

"A lady of the name of Sly, who kept about a couple of dozen cats and fat spaniels, and was intended by mother Nature to remain Miss Sly from the hour of her birth to that of her much-desired decease by some score or two poor relations—"

"I can't help it," interrupted Mr. Wirkem. "Pardon me, Tom," continued he, strangling his laugh in its birth, "but I must ask the question. Why was Miss Sly then always in error?"

There was a pause. Each surveyed the features of his fellow in silence, as if trying by some inexplicable magnetic power to anticipate or glean the solution. After a few tantalizing moments, the President dispelled the mystery by adding :—

“Do you give it up? Why, because she was always *amiss*.”

“Ha, ha, ha,” laughed John Hogg loudly above the plaudits of the entire audience. “So she was, Mr. Wirkem, sir—the old screw.”

“Go on, my dear boy Tom,” said the President. “I deserve the whip for putting the skid on your drag.”

“Don’t mention it, Dick,” replied Tom Short. “The more you put spokes into my wheel, the better she’ll trundle, I know. But what I was going to say concerning Miss Sly,” continued he, “is this. She was, what every body most religiously believed her to be, a real old maid, ugly to look at, ugly tempered,

and, in short, ugly at all points. There wasn't a redeeming mole on her body, or speck in her mind. Well ! as you may suppose, not a few disliked Miss Sly, and she hated every body. Infants she couldn't abide, and, whenever a wedding was talked of, her skin would turn bright orange, and you'd think she'd a sudden attack of yellow jaundice."

"I never heard of a woman having the glanders afore, Mr. Wirkem, sir," remarked John Hogg, seriously.

"No, John, no," replied the President. "The complaints are not the same ; but don't interrupt."

"I've heard these old maids have all sorts of odd fits and crotchets," continued Tom Short. "One of Miss Sly's was to be considered, all in the wink of a duck's eye, the most modest female in all England. Cats and dogs were turned off at a minute's warning, because they *would* play together with unbe-

coming familiarities. She wrote letters to the editors of the papers, calling upon 'em to thunder forth their strictures upon toy-shop-keepers, for exposing undressed dolls for sale. Even the old martin's nest was pulled down from the corner of her bedroom window, where it had been for many a long year, and whose mud-plastered masonry had afforded shelter to countless fleet-winged skimmers of the air. Miss Sly had this done upon principle, she said, determined to discountenance the very birds from increasing and multiplying. From step to step did Miss Sly progress in the high road of modesty, until there appeared no stone left unturned. However, one morning she was discovered blushing crimson, and burying her face in her handkerchief, like the chief mourner at a royal funeral, and, most likely, from the same motive, more for show than feeling.

“ ‘That it should come to this!’ exclaimed she to a servant rushing into the room to the

loud and shrill summons of a bell. 'That it should come to this, Sally!' repeated she. 'Insult, wrong, and injury.'

" 'What's the matter, Miss?' inquired the domestic. 'What *is* the matter?'

" 'Have you been into the drawing-room?' asked her mistress.

" 'Dusted it from top to bottom,' replied Sally.

" 'Great Heaven!' ejaculated Miss Sly, casting her eyes piously to the ceiling, and, apparently overcome with the intensity of her sensibility, she clasped her hands, and burst into a flood of tears.

" 'Ho, missis!' exclaimed Sally. 'Ho, missis! wot is broke, wot is gone to everlasting smash?'

" 'My honour,' quickly replied Miss Sly, in that sort of whisper which actors sometimes speak in, when every body's to hear except the person closest, 'my honour, Sally.'

" 'Forgive us our trespasses!' said Sally, by way of a parenthesis.

“ ‘If,’ resumed Miss Sly, with that qualifying monosyllable, ‘the circumstance gets reported abroad. However, even in that case,” continued Miss Sly, ‘you are witness to my horror and shocked feelings.’

“ ‘To be sure I am,’ coincided Sally, ‘and would swear till all was blue to ’em.’

“ ‘Should, through some unlucky accident, the butcher, baker, grocer, or, indeed,’ continued Miss Sly, shutting both her eyes, and seeing the chain by which tattling-tongued communications are conveyed to the four corners of the earth, ‘any one become acquainted with what I saw this morning, and feel sufficient interest in my temporal welfare to speak the truth, I hope it will be the *whole* truth, Sally, and that they will add how much horror I expressed at the circumstance.’

“ Miss Sly hesitated.

“ ‘What circumstance, miss?’ inquired Sally, all agog to hear.

“ ‘Why, the flap of the table was down!’ rejoined Miss Sly.

Since the maiden meeting of the club there had been many a roar, to load the welkin with trembling echoes; but it is very questionable whether there had been one to surpass that ringing from every lip, upon the conclusion of Tom Short's anecdote.

John Hogg rubbed his knees until the quick friction scorched the palms of his hardy hands, and, while a continued tear streamed from his glistening ogle from excessive mirth, he kept digging, occasionally, at the centre of Melancholy Joey's ribs, with the end of a stiffened thumb, until that individual was fain to laugh languidly—not seeing the joke—at the sensation familiarly called a tickle.

“That lady was a shade too modest for thi world,” observed Peter Bivin.

“Ay,” replied Mr. Wirkem, his ponderous sides still in a quiver, “and a good deal too much so for the next, I'm thinking.”

“Bless'd if you laugh in that style much longer,” said Mr. Wyper to one-eyed Jack, “you'll get wet through a-cryin.”

"Put a mackintosh on him, then," replied the President, "or a waterproof cape. You'll find both there," continued the old coachman, pointing to a goodly array of coats and other garments suspended on a long row of pegs.

"How I should like to have tied a tin kettle to her—"

The ex-postboy, Mr. Toddy, would have said "tail," but remembering that no such appendage belonged to the sex divine, he corrected himself by substituting "behind."

"And a-chased her, with a few pebbles in it," added John Hogg, by way of amendment, "from Whitechapel Church to Hyde Park corner."

"That would be a breach of good manners, John," remarked the President, resuming his gravity. "To run whooping after any member of the feminine gender, be she fair or fat, tall or slender, more especially with a tin saucepan or old fish-kettle fixed to her dicky, would be no specimen of good breeding."

“Perhaps not, Mr. Wirkem, sir,” replied Jack, who invariably agreed with his patron. “But talking of breedin,” continued the more than usually loquacious ostler, “puts me in mind of the remembrance of an old pal of mine, gone—God knows where! perhaps to the dogs, perhaps to heaven. Howsomever, he was the most timosum creetur eyes ever saw. If you hollered close to his head, when he didn’t expect it, how he would start, to be sure! I’ve seen him turn white as a peeled turnip when a oss tried to give him a taste of cold iron, and if so be he just touched him by way of a nibble to keep his grinders in play, he’d fly out o’ the stall, and be fit to faint, like a woman in a fit of the twitters. I tried to reason him out o’ these softs; but nothin served to do it. At last a thought struck me. Pray, said I, who was your father and mother?”

“My father was a butler,” replied he, “and my mother a lady’s-maid.”

"It's a hopeless case," rejoined I. "There's no pluck, Harry, in your hash. Take a friend's advice and leave the stable ; it isn't a spot for your talents to show themselves in."

"He did, Mr. Wirkem, sir," continued Jack, "and I never see him from that hour to this."

"He was right, quite right to leave," remarked the President. "From such a pedigree what *could* be expected ? There was no spirit, no *jumping* in him, I'll be sworn."

"Now, Dick Wirkem," said the Vice-president, "the night's getting on, and we do nothing but talk."

"I hope," replied the President, speaking slowly, and looking hard in the face of his companion opposite—that is to say as hard as the cloud of smoke would permit—"our talk is not disagreeable to you, Bill, or any other gentleman present?"

"Oh, no," quickly replied Mr. Johnson, looking somewhat embarrassed at the serious

manner of the President, "Oh no, Dick. I merely wanted to remind you that the call—"

"Is with me," interrupted the old coachman, regaining his wonted good-humour. "Well, well! then I shall exercise the right by calling upon our friend Banbury for one of his lilliputian staves."

"He's a clever cabbage at a song," whispered John Hogg to Mr. Wyper. "I never heard a prettier whistler."

Profound silence being obtained, the gentleman-whip sang the following words:—

They have fled then for ever, those pitiless hours
That bless'd us with hopes for a day,
And, shedding a smile on this drear world of ours,
Flew back to their heaven away.

In vain do we look for those rays of delight
That shone in our bleak path of sorrow,
As the heaven we gaze on, so lovely to-night,
Is shadowed in clouds ere the morrow.

How dear were those moments, too sunny to last,
When I worshipped thy beauty in vain!

The dreams of my gladness like summer clouds passed,
And winter closed o'er me again.

Thou art gone far away, and new lovers will find
In the light of those eyes a bright heaven ;
Yet thy name shall in Memory's page be enshrined,
Though our hearts, dearest Fanny, are riven.

"Very nice, indeed, Dick," observed the President, as Banbury concluded his song, and the approval met with a general echo.

"I wonder whether that Fanny just mentioned, Mr. Wirkem, sir," remarked one-eyed Jack, "was the one I heard of a-givin orders for the pork-butcher to cut up a fat hog."

"Can't say, John, I'm sure," replied the President with a smile. "But, when was that?"

"It's many a long year ago," returned Jack, "that a Miss Fanny Binks of Putney had a twenty stone pig killed, and says she to the sawbones, 'I'm partickler fond o' hams, and so be sure to cut him up so as to make the *greatest number* of 'em.' Ha, ha, ha,"

laughed Jack, "there was a innocent for ye!"

"Now then, Dick," said the President, "we'll not dwell or hang upon the road. Select your prad, and start him."

"Supposing we give Jacob Plywel a fresh turn, then," replied Banbury.

"With all my heart and collar," returned Jacob.

"The sentiment of every thorough-bred good oss," added Mr. Wirkem.

"We all hear now and then," said Jacob, "some popular saying in the mouth of every little dirty scamp and roving vagabond. At one time the cry was in country and in town, 'There you go with your eye out, and your nose a *leetle* damaged.' That was succeeded by, 'Flare up!' and 'Boil us up a gallop.' Then came, 'What a shocking bad hat!' Then, 'Does your mother know you're out?' added to which the question was often put as to the worthy old soul's having parted

with her mangle. Of course all these sayings had an origin and cause of their being; but what they were I never learned. However, the last one, '*Go it, Rous!*' I chanced to hear; and as the source from which it sprung may amuse ye, I will relate the particulars."

"Do, Jacob," said the President, refilling his pipe, and settling himself comfortably in his chair, to hearken willingly to the narration.

CHAPTER XIII.

“BRAVO, ROUS!”

There's no one here but must know the Eagle in the City Road, (commenced Jacob Plywel) and a very nice cheap free an easy sort of a place it is for a chap to smoke his pipe, sip his grog, and see the play all at the same time.

Last Easter Monday two very respectable-looking young men went there about eleven o'clock in the morning, and, entering the large public room, called for a pint of ale, and a plate of sweet biscuits.

Immediately after the refreshments were brought, a third party entered the apartment

—a seedy-looking, swaggering sort of a fellow, —and occupied a seat at the adjoining table. He was a man who might have seen better days; but it is very questionable, and if he had, it must have been a considerable time since, for not a vestige of the skirts of one could be traced in, or of, aught belonging to him. His hat must ever have been, what it now indubitably was, the corner stone, the top tile of one who never deemed “the world his friend, nor the world’s law.” Nobody with a character to lose would have worn such a damning sign of a total want of moral rectitude. Then the coat was proof positive, —a clear case of the faded, weedy, outside habiliment of a man whose word was anything but his bond. His we-name-them-nots had always been grey; but now age had frosted them into an undecided colour, between a dirty whity-brown and a bilious hue; and so shrunk and cramped had they become in their decrepid, forlorn old age, that the long straps,

constructed as the intermediate link between them and the slippered shoes, gave up their office in despair, and permitted a good foot of darned and ragged stockings to peep in relief.

The stranger's face,—but it was not to be strictly called a face, — it was a mask, speckled, blotched, and pimpled,—one which, perchance, occasioned the barber's apprentice to apologize for his tardy mode of shaving by saying, "If there isn't much hair, there's a sight of small *pimpules*."

Soon after taking his seat, and establishing a right to continue there by calling for "half a pint of half-an'-half, with the froth off," he stuck his dilapidated gossamer very much on the right side of his head; and, putting on one of the most cut-and-dried impudent looks as ever was seen, commenced chaffing the two young men, by asking, "How they enjoyed the sport of counter-skipping?"

The young fellows stared at this unex-

pected attack, and, after expressing their indignation by looking at the scamp silently and stedfastly, turned their backs upon him, in the most approved manner of expressive indignation.

“I dare say,” resumed he, nothing abashed by the cool reception of his slang, “that you think yourselves men of high rank and particular odour; but upon my soul it’s a great mistake. More common swells I never seed.”

“How dare you, sir, insult us in this way?” asked one of the attacked. “Strangers as we are to you, what is the reason of your thus gratuitously affronting us?”

“Draw it mild,” replied the unmoved scamp. “I’ll give ye a wrinkle!” continued he. “Whenever you want to show the bump-tious, be sure and pick out a little un. *I* always do, and that’s the reason I’m cooking your goose.”

The young men returned no answer, but seemed bent upon consuming their biscuits and ale as fast as possible.

"It'll be soon all up with *your* patchwork," continued the stranger. "Easter Monday for shop-snips is just what it is to Greenwich donkeys and all other sorts of asses,—it only lasts for a day."

"Ring that bell!" said one of the young fellows to his companion. "I won't stand this any longer. Pray, waiter," continued he, as the summons was readily answered, "did we come here to be insulted?"

"Insulted, sir?" exclaimed the man of napkins.

"Yes, that's the question I put."

"Dear me! of course not, sir," returned the waiter, smiling. "No gentlemen wot pays their way is ever insulted in the Eagle. The only case, indeed, that ever I remember of a serious shindy was when two goes of gin and a mixed punch tried to make a clean bolt

over the palings. Then there *was* a row—a precious row.”

“We’ve been insulted, though, and very much insulted,” rejoined the young chap, with a face burning with affront.

“By whom, sir?” said the waiter, staring round at the few customers, and, with the same instinct or reason that a yard dog betrays upon the approach of a beggar in tatters, fixing his look upon the delinquent.

“That’s the feller,” observed one of the injured, pointing to the offender, who, lifting the pewter pot, winked at the waiter, buried his nose in the froth, and looked as if nothing had happened.

“His behaviour’s scandalous,” remarked a pale, thin, young chap, almost sick with the desperate attempt of smoking a roll of brown paper and dried lettuce-leaves.

“He ought to be kicked from society,” observed another.

“And well kicked too,” echoed a third.

"Come, you sir," said the waiter, joining in the popular cry, "this won't do at any price. I'll call master."

"If you do," replied the scamp, as pleasant and as cool as pump-water, "you'll just hear what *I'll* call him."

"You're a pretty chicken to cackle, I don't think," rejoined the waiter. "We'll just see then what you will do;" and, leaving the room for the purpose of fetching the proprietor, he quickly returned with him.

"Now, sir," said Mr. Rous, a fine, portly, consequential-looking person, "I understand you've been insolent here, and therefore I'll trouble you to tramp."

"I shan't budge an inch for any man living," replied the chap; and, burying his hands in his breeches-pockets, he commenced singing the snatch of a song running thus,—

"Dear Alice, believe me,
I ne'er will deceive thee."

"But if one man can't eject you," inter-

rupted Mr. Rous, "half-a-dozen shall. Tom, fetch every waiter from below; we'll soon show him the outside of this establishment."

"That's right, sir!" exclaimed one of the strangers present; and everybody else assented to the opinion.

"Now, sir," observed the proprietor, upon the entrance of some six or seven of his servants, "will you go quietly?"

"Certainly not," replied the man. "I never did anything quietly in my life, and I'm not going to begin now."

"If you don't immediately quit this room," returned Mr. Rous, in a towering passion, "I'll order my men to turn you out into the street."

"Then order away!" added the fellow. "I'm going to stick here as long as I can, and no mistake!"

"Then pitch him out!" said the landlord of the Eagle; and to the trial went the three couple of waiters.

We all know, however, that it's an easier task to talk about doing a thing than accomplishing it. The chap stuck to his seat like glue; clutched the table, kicked the shins of the unhappy waiters, planted a blow now and then in their unguarded bread-baskets, and showed himself to be, what in fact he really was, a very ugly customer.

For some time Mr. Rous stood by, looking on with increasing impatience at the *mêlée*. At length, his fingers itching for the fray, he could no longer desist from joining in it.

"Bravo, Rous!" shouted one of the young men whose complaint originated the disturbance, as the landlord seized the rebel's collar, and digging his knuckles into his jugular vein, turned the hue of his countenance to a deep mulberry.

"Bravo, Rous!" responded the other; and the cry was rung from everybody present.

The struggle now became furious. To and fro the combatants werved; and no sooner did

there seem to be a chance of finally ejecting the refractory stranger than he slipped from their grasp, like a ball of wet soap, and re-established himself in some stronghold or corner.

"Drop me as you would a hot tater!" cried he, as the landlord tried to drag him from under a table which afforded him temporary shelter from the storm.

"Come out!" thundered Mr. Rous. "Come out! or I'll draw the skin from your bones!"

"Then you won't drop me?" replied the man. "Very good;" and giving a sudden jerk with his feet, he caught the landlord in the centre of his protruding corporation, and sent him backwards rolling to the floor, like a bucket on an inclined plane.

Over and over he rolled; but, like a giant refreshed by a tumble, he gathered himself up, and once more clutched and grappled with his enemy.

"Bravo, Rous!" hallooed one.

“Bravo, Rous!” shouted another.

And “Bravo, Rous!” was echoed far and wide. At length, by dint of unprecedented exertion, the fellow was tugged and dragged to the door, where he put forth unexpected strength and stratagem to maintain his ground. He clawed hold of the posts, and so firm and fixed was his grasp, that nothing but hammering his fingers with a poker could induce him to give way.

“Bravo, Rous!” bawled one of the young men who was most vociferous in cheering on the combatants.

“Bravo, Rous!” screamed the other, flitting in the rear of the crowd, and seeming to take a lively interest in speedily ejecting the unwelcome intruder.

Such was the hubbub, that persons from all parts of the house hastened to the scene, deserting various posts of trust from indiscreet curiosity. The bar was left without its superintendent; the kitchen was freed of the cook;

in short, except on and about the immediate spot of disturbance, the place became abandoned.

“Bravo, Rous!” was still the war-whoop. Numbers prevailed. The obstinate brawler fought from ‘twig to bough and from bough to stump.’ Still, securely, though slowly, his final overthrow was approaching. His opponents uniting in one desperate push, as they reached the threshold of the entrance, thrust him into the street, and then, “Bravo, Rous!” was followed by a loud and hearty “hurrah,” as a token and confirmation of victory.

Mr. Rous, as I before observed, (continued Jacob Plywel,) was anything but a lean gentleman, and with his unusual exertions a considerable quantity of superfluous flesh became in a fluid state, and began to trickle from every pore in his skin. Putting his hand in his pocket to draw forth a handkerchief to mop up the moisture, he was

somewhat surprised to discover that it was gone. And then, remembering that there should be the sum of nearly a hundred pounds in another private poke in his costume, he dipped his fingers into it with sensations of distrust; and that pocket, too, was empty.

"Great Heaven!" exclaimed the proprietor and landlord of the Eagle, "I've been robbed, plundered—"

"The till," interrupted a voice grating excruciatingly on his ear, "the till's been broken open and every sixpence taken."

"Bravo, Rous!" shouted an infantine voice in the distance. It was a wandering vender of periwinkles, a gratified witness of the finish of the tumult.

"The bar closet, too," screamed another voice, "the bar closet's been forced, and the plate's gone, down to the last tea-spoon."

"Sea and earth, and all that in them is!" exclaimed the landlord of the Eagle.
"What do I hear?"

"Bravo, Rous!" repeated the peripatetic vender of diminutive shell-fish, in a still fainter voice, as he made his distance greater.

"It was a regular plant," said the manager of the Eagle, as he reflected on the late proceedings, and calculated the extent of his losses. "As regular built a plant as ever was," continued he.

"No doubt o' that, sir," chimed in a waiter. "The two swells, and the rusty cove, what cut up so rough, was one firm in the prigging line."

"That I ever should have been made game of in this way!" sighed the landlord. "Send for a policeman, and let him be one of the *detective force*."

"Bravo, Rous!" was once more faintly heard from the tongue of the periwinkle merchant, and afterwards, when the tale got wind, countless echoes were heard from all quarters of the compass.

And such was the origin of that once popular cry, "Bravo, Rous!"

"Thank ye, Jacob," said the President. "I like to know the origin of things in general. I've often wondered about the beginning of folks' names. You may depend on it there were queer causes for some of 'em. There's a great deal in a name," continued the old coachman, "more than most people think for. It acts like new harness, and makes even a common hack look twenty per cent. better than he really is."

"Quite true, Dick," observed Peter Bivin; "and it would be well for parents to think of that when they get up christening matches."

"I wish, Mr. Wirkem, sir," added one-eyed Jack, "that my male parent had had that wrinkle when I was little and tiny. He might have fathered me with a top-sawyer of a name instead of John Hogg. Bless'd if I ever have any kids," continued he, "I'll call 'em Dukes of Dorset, and Bishops of Bath and

Wells. If it comes to names, tickle me gently, but I'll lather the best soap!"

Jack's determination created some merriment, and all appeared to enjoy it except Melancholy Joey, who, after looking at his friend 'more in sorrow than in anger' for some handful of seconds, whispered, "Don't be imprudent, John. I took you for a gentleman of common sense."

"And particularly common, no doubt," added one-eyed Jack. "But what do you mean, my old adverb?"

"I meant, sir," returned Mr. Wyper, seriously, and exhibiting the usual symptoms of irritation in the heightened colour of the tip of his nose, "I meant, sir, in alluding to kids. At the same time, when offering my best advice, I'll thank you not to call me beastly names."

"Who called ye names?" inquired Jack, with a fiery glance.

"You did," replied Mr. Wyper, "or my ears deceived me."

"Hush, hush," interposed Mr. Wirkem.
"What is this discussion about, eh?"

"He called me—but I won't offend ye, sir, by repeating what he said," replied Melancholy Joey.

"Then, I can't decide whether he's to blame or not," rejoined the President.

"I called him nothing of note," added Jack, in an indifferent manner.

"I don't know what you call of *note*," said Mr. Wyper, with emphasis and fluttering with excitement; "but I'm not a subject to bear an affront too tamely."

"What did he say?" asked Mr. Wirkem, in the tone imperative.

"He called me, sir," replied Melancholy Joey, as if about to commit a profanation, "he called me, sir, a hadwerb."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DUEL.

It took considerable persuasion on the part of the President to convince Mr. Wyper that his honour had not suffered, nor his dignity been impugned, by being called an "adverb." At length, however, he was satisfied, and the olive branch being extended, the grasp of friendship was exchanged, and all became merry again as a marriage-bell.

"I'm as easy and comfortable," remarked John Hogg, casting a look round the fire-lit walls, "as an old slipper. Really, Mr. Wirkem, sir, I feel such a glow here in my charitables, as I call my buzzum," continued he, giving

his broad and ample chest a thump that sounded deep and loud, "that I could share my grog with my enemy, and give him my Sunday breeches. I could indeed, sir."

"That's a Christian feeling, John," replied the President; "one that does credit to ye; and it would be well if a great many folks who speak finer language had as fine a spring to pump from."

"Hear! hear!" added Dick Banbury.

"I beg pardon," chimed in Toddy respectfully, "but I don't think Jack's had much to do with springs or pumps. He's much too partial to lush to have anything to do with water, except as a *leetle* qualifier to liquor."

"Strictly speaking," replied Mr. Wirkem, "you are right; but I was making the observation as a metaphor."

"Ay, I understand," rejoined the ex-post-boy, "as a sort of summut short to a faint stomach."

"I wish you'd be quiet," returned one-

eyed Jack, elbowing his companion, "and not go for to put meanings in Mr. Wirkem's sayings."

"But supposing I stumble on 'em, and don't understand what they mean," added Toddy, "an't I to learn by axing?"

"Certainly not," replied John Hogg; "if you stumble, fall, break your neck, and be d—d! but don't exhibit your ignorance. That I can't forgive."

"I don't see why I shouldn't pick my way a little," rejoined Toddy perseveringly; "many's the time I've saved a downer, by keeping my eyes afore the osses' listeners."

"You're a-tryin to come the feelosopher," returned John Hogg. "Leave that to Mr. Wirkem and your betters," continued he, "or you'll find it'll be soon all up with *your* patchwork. Bless'd if it don't require a precious good sea-pie o' learnin to make a feelosopher!"

"I don't see that exactly," added Mr.

Wyper, who appeared ready to join issue with one-eyed Jack upon any subject.

"Didn't expect you would," replied John; "a white owl's a poor sort o' creetur for sunshine."

At this uncomplimentary reference the ex-postboy laughed immoderately, and, as his mirth continued to increase, Melancholy Joey's germs of chagrin began to sprout into a crop of irritation, and, at length, ripened into symptoms of unequivocal passion.

"I'll trouble you, sir,—Mr. Toddy I'm addressin,"—commenced he, with his prominent feature becoming suddenly of the hue of a hot cinder, "not to smoke with larfin at me. I—I—I—won't be larft at by a Prince; let alone,"—and his nose curled with disdain—"let alone a feller that's bumped through life on tanned pig-skin. Things has come to a pretty pass!"

During this speech the ex-postboy recovered a gravity remarkable for its sternness. At the conclusion of the address there seemed

to be an involuntary contraction of the muscles in his hands, and, if it had not been for a movement on the part of John Hogg to attract his attention in an opposite direction, there might have been an abrupt collision between his clenched digits and the unfavoured features of Mr. Wyper.

“Never take advantage of a chap’s position,” observed one-eyed Jack in an undertone. “To give him a spank uncautioned, or to kick him when a-tyin his shoe-string, is just what a Yankee-doodle or a Frenchman does. A fair stand-up fight, with a clear ring, no cross, and no favour, equal weights, pluck, and science, is the best way to settle a hash o’ quarrels.”

“And I’m ready to settle ours in the same fashion,” replied Toddy, “if Mr. Wyper is agreeable; but somehow or another it *shall* be settled,” continued he resolutely. “I’m not going to be called a feller for nothin.”

“Then you shouldn’t have larfed at me,”

returned Melancholy Joey, with an air of justification.

"I didn't," added the ex-postboy; "nobody *could* grin at ye if they was to try ever so. One might as well expect to feel funny with the toothache, rheumatism, a bad corn, or a bunion."

"Then what made you look in my face and haw, haw, haw, I should like to know?" said Mr. Wyper.

"Not *at* you; but what was said *of* ye," replied Toddy. "Not that I was bound to give an answer," continued he, careful of his prerogative.

"It's all the same," rejoined Melancholy Joey. "It's one and the same thing whether *of* or *at*, and I won't stand it from you, sir. Some folks is privileged to poke their fun at other folks, but other folks isn't privileged to poke their fun at some folks."

"It will be well for some folks," replied Toddy, with a menacing manner which could

scarcely be called doubtful, "if fun is the only thing they get poked at 'em ; and if they ain't over-anxious to have a harder wedge-table in their bread-baskets, they'll put a very tight curb on their jaw."

During this colloquy, of pugnacious tendency, John Hogg was rubbing his knees, winking his eye of encouragement to one and then to the other, and adding fuel to the lamp of discord by every means in his power.

"We shall have a shindy presently," muttered he to himself, while the joyful anticipation was made evident in his beaming countenance. "We shall have a shindy presently," repeated he, and the words unintentionally fell on the ear of the President.

"What's that I hear?" inquired Mr. Wirkem, who for some minutes had been absorbed in some mental reverie. "What's that I hear?"

"Melancholy Joey and Toddy, sir, are a-brewin a shindy," replied John, who, meeting the stern look of his patron, now inclined to

seem anything but a participator in the proceedings.

"Brewing a shindy!" exclaimed Mr. Wirkem. "Really, Mr. Wyper," continued he in a reproachful tone, "you appear to be too apt to quarrel. No sooner is one cause of discomfiture removed than you pounce upon another, with the readiness of a child scrambling for hard-bake."

"I won't be larfed at," replied Melancholy Joey in a superlatively surly voice.

"My dear sir," expostulated Mr. Wirkem, "we *must* be laughed at. We are merry at others, and others are merry at us; and believe me, an old coachman that's been on the road, hill, dale, slope, and level, for little less than half a century, that those who laugh most are most laughed at. It is absurd and ignorant for any one to think he is exempt from the censure, malice, or ridicule of those who elbow him in this jostling, jnnketing world. We all have our turns in the mill. To-day we grind,

to-morrow we are ground; and it would be well to remember, when we're putting on the screw, that as we deal so are we dealt by."

"I never larf at nobody," returned Mr. Wyper, "and therefore by that same rule nobody ought n't never to larf at me."

"It does n't follow as a matter of course," rejoined the President. "I have known the gravity of some persons turn the grin against them, especially when it has been the mask of pretence for being better than their neighbours."

"I don't wear no mask," added Melancholy Joey, more perversely and obstinately than ever, "and I won't be larfed at."

"Upon my honour," said Mr. Wirkem, seriously, "there's no convincing ye, Mr. Wyper."

"He's as full o' bounce as a game-cock," remarked John Hogg, in an under and secret tone.

The President signified his assent to this opinion by a single nod of his head.

"He wants it taken out of him," added one-eyed Jack, in a similar voice.

Mr. Wirkem again nodded, and, by the compression of his lips, there appeared to be a fixed determination upon the point in question.

"Perhaps, Mr. Wirkem, sir, it would please the parties concerned," suggested John Hogg, with profound humility, "to have a friendly mill. Just a round or two might mortar up the crack of friendship," continued he.

"Ah, Dick!" chimed in the Vice-president, who was any thing but opposed to exhibitions in the fistic art, "perhaps it might. Supposing we have a sparring-match."

"I'll not be called a feller for nothin," remarked Toddy, turning up the cuffs of his jacket.

"And I won't be larfed at," replied Mr. Wyper, in a most dogged humour.

"Bless'd if he an't more ginger in him than I expected," soliloquized one-eyed Jack.

"The thing's on the square," observed Tom Short. "They're both eager for the fray; let's clear away the chairs and table."

"If there's to be an affair of honour, any mode of satisfaction, with members of this club, for any quarrel or difference arising in or out of it," replied Mr. Wirkem, with the authority of a potentate, "I shall take upon myself the responsibility of the arrangements."

This declaration silenced the innumerable and various suggestions ready to be dropped from every tongue.

"First let me know whether I fully comprehend the state of things," added the President. "You, Mr. Wyper, consider yourself aggrieved, I believe, by being laughed at by Mr. Toddy."

"I do," replied Melancholy Joey; "and it an't the first time."

"And you require satisfaction or an apology," rejoined Mr. Wirkem.

"In course I do," returned Mr. Wyper proudly, flattering himself that he was on velvet, and having it all his own way.

"Matters are in a nutshell," added the President. "Will you, Mr. Toddy, make amends for the real or imaginary affront given, by offering an apology?"

"Hapologise!" exclaimed the ex-postboy, with contempt. "I'll black his eyes."

"Very good," said Mr. Wirkem. "That's a negative implied. Now the point arrives as to the way in which the alternative is to be carried out," continued he; "and unless the business is agreed upon and settled between ye, as a preliminary step, that my proposition, conditions, and rules are to be abided by to the letter, in strictness of meaning and spirit, I shall vacate the chair and leave the adjustment, perchance, to more capable—"

"No, no, no, no," interrupted several voices.

"Don't talk in that fashion, Dick," remarked Bill Johnson. "Name the rules, and they *shall* be abided by."

"That they shall, Mr. Wirkem, sir," observed one-eyed Jack, "or I'll lick 'em both."

"I'm agreeable to what's laid down as the law," croaked Melancholy Joey, in a truly dismal voice, having mental glimmerings of his antagonist's bent digits in the immediate neighbourhood of his pericranium.

"And so am I," ejaculated the ex-postboy, in the happiest mood conceivable.

"I'm satisfied," replied the President. "Let each man, then," continued he, "draw off a stocking, and fill or charge it, as best he can, with soot from this old chimney here—I dare venture an opinion that a broom hasn't touched it for many a long year—and sitting apart on a couple of chairs, at the distance of about a yard, belabour one another with these weapons until both are tired, or one calls 'hold! enough.'"

A shout and halloo of boisterous, uproarious mirth followed this binding proposition of the President. Roar followed roar, like succeeding waves upon the beach, and it seemed not improbable that they would imitate them in endless succession.

The ex-postboy, however, was any thing but gratified with this declared mode of warfare.

"I hate playing at fighting," said he to John Hogg. "I thought the event was to come off with the rules of the P. R.—a twenty-feet square roped ring, seconds, backers, bottleholders, and umpire."

"No matter what you thought," replied his companion. "Thoughts an't for boys. Do as you're told."

Toddy acceded to this peremptory order by reluctantly proceeding to pull off his faded top-boot, and then a thick, substantial lamb's-wool stocking.

Mr. Wyper, without an observation or mur-

mur, or, indeed, the faintest expression upon his features, indicating either pleasure or displeasure at the unexpected and eccentric mode of offence, began preparations for the coming fray. Slowly he drew his long, black, left boot, by reason of the hose on his dexter foot being dispossessed of a heel, and, if truth must be told, exhibited a stocking with few less apertures than a full-sized cullender.

“That will never hold soot,” observed John Hogg, “any more than a pail without a bottom would hold water.”

Notwithstanding this erudite opinion, concerning the unfitness of Mr. Wyper’s stocking for the purpose to which it was now to be applied, he, amid the laughter and cheers of the assembly, was the first to commence loading his weapon. Scraping a shovel as far as he could up the back of the great, wide chimney, he withdrew it with a considerable quantity of the grimy powder, and deposited it in the foot of the unsound hose.

"Come," said one-eyed Jack, impatiently, to the ex-postboy, "be alive. Joey's a-gettin first pull at the soot, remember. And," continued he, dropping his voice to a whisper, and giving a dig in the ribs by way of accompaniment, "if I was you, and found it run short, I'd make it up with cinders, and *perhaps* a few nobs of hard coal if they came handy."

Toddy's eyes brightened at this suggestion, and rising with alacrity from his chair, he joined the side of his opponent, to follow his example.

In a short time the respective instruments of offence were fully prepared; but they offered very different effects. The ex-postboy's looked a weighty, sturdy weapon, ready and capable of giving a thwack with stunning effect. The part intended to embrace the leg was twisted like a hayband, and at the ankle one turn was made, to keep in solid condition the crammed soot and cinders; while his antagonist's was loose, ill-stuffed, and looked

like a pincushion with sundry loopholes to let the material out.

While these preparations were going on, John Hogg, under the superintendence of the President, wheeled the table to the most distant end of the apartment, and pushed and piled the superfluous chairs into nooks and corners.

"There," said he, "is a clear stage, and precious little favour there'll be, I expect."

"Put two chairs under the chandelier," directed Mr. Wirkem, "and lower it a few inches, John, so that we may see fair and pleasant to ourselves."

One-eyed Jack conformed with alacrity to the order, and a cheerful "all right" burst from his lips as of old.

"Now Messieurs Wyper and Toddy," said the President, "take your respective places."

"They should toss for choice," remarked John Hogg, desirous of having the proceedings conducted as professionally as possible.

"We'll dispense with that ceremony," rejoined Mr. Wirkem. "Form a wide ring," continued he, as the belligerents came to the scratch.

The spectators having complied, Melancholy Joey and the ex-postboy grasped their charged stockings, and eyed each other with malice prepense.

"Now, remember," said Mr. Wirkem, blending the characters of seconds, backers, and abitrator in his own person, "you're to pepper away until one is satisfied or both are tired. And when I give the word," continued he, "let fly, and when I say 'hold,' clap the skid on your elbows."

There was a pause. Not a word was spoken, and nothing was heard to break the stillness reigning save a mysterious thumping which seemed to issue from or near the regions of Mr. Wyper's bosom.

"Hold fast!" hallooed the President, as often he had done of yore, "and let them go."

The signal was obeyed. Crack, crack, came the missiles on the devoted physiognomies of the heroes. The first exchange produced very palpable effects. Mr. Wyper's fell as true as a shaft winged to a target's eye in the middle of the ex-postboy's countenance, and so plentifully powdered it with the jetty ingredients, that he became at once masked to sight. Toddy's lambswool, however, told with more lasting reality. The formidable weapon struck Melancholy Joey's nasal organ on the extreme tip, and in a short time a thin, pinky fluid issued from one nostril, to mingle with the slight coat of soot which the concussion forced from the thick folds of the stocking.

"He's tapped his claret," shouted John Hogg, in ecstasy. "First blood for Toddy."

Mr. Wirkem appeared much astonished at this unthought-of result, and he seemed undetermined whether hostilities should proceed or not. His hesitation, however, gave way at the thought of the continuance of them

being optional on the part of either of the combatants.

“Go it!” hallooed Jack. “Give it him, Joey! At him, Toddy!”

With cheers from all sides, laughter, and shouts, the fight continued. Mr. Wyper did his best to return with interest the blows received; but his stocking soon became flabby, and every moment a fresh rent, or two small ones joining in enlarged unity, announced the hastening destruction of this sinew of war. Black as the murky darkness of the winter night did he render the face and upper stories of the ex-postboy; but otherwise no graver results were produced than if they had been dusted with a bunch of feathers.

It was a very different case with Melancholy Joey’s profile and other appurtenances annexed. Seldom was there a descent of the lambswool without a contusion inflicted. In quick succession, too, the blows came, and offered little time for reflecting on the probable effect of “each particular” stroke.

"He's taking the bounce out of him," said Jack, in a confidential whisper to the President. "You'll see him, Mr. Wirkem, sir," continued he, "down upon his hocks, presently, and going uncommon close to the ground."

The prediction was on the eve of being verified. Such was the force of Toddy's hammering, that the almost vanquished Mr. Wyper began to exhibit an appearance described in sporting phraseology as "groggy." A sort of hissing sounded in his ears, occasioned, perhaps, by the jumble and effervescing of his forcibly mingled and conglomerated ideas; his arm felt next to powerless, and the now totally exhausted stocking did little other service than reclean the countenance it had so effectually begrimed. Fainter and fainter grew the struggle. Melancholy Joey's external bearing was truly miserable, and as the mercury of his courage and strength dropped, Toddy's became in the ascendant.

"It's all but up the country with him," remarked John Hogg, in an under-tone. "He'd have run away afore, only he's too frightened."

One more flap that would scarcely have dislodged a fly from his opponent's cheek, and Mr. Wyper's arm remained unlifted by his side. Well would it have been for him had Toddy's imitated the example at that particular nick of time. But, alas! just then the ex-postboy had resolved to add fresh power to his elbow. The weapon whirled in the air like the flail of a thresher, and long before Mr. Wirkem could give the order "to hold," down it came, exactly between Melancholy Joey's eyes, with unprecedented severity.

It must be recorded. The discomfited Mr. Wyper cast one piteous look about him, searching for that sympathy of which he stood so much in need, and then applying the stocking to his o'er-charged eyes, burst into a deluge of tears, accompanied by peculiar sounds defined by schoolboys as "blubbering."

"Come, come," said Mr. Wirkem, soothingly, while the rest made the welkin echo with their shout of fun; "come, come; there's not much damage done, Mr. Wyper. A little soap and water will remove all the injury. Pray, gentlemen," continued he, "don't laugh while our friend here is weeping."

This silenced the noisy group; but still Melancholy Joey squeezed salt tears from his optics, as if a couple of springs had been just reached for the first time.

"Pray compose yourself," said the President, offering his glass of particularly well-mixed punch to Mr. Wyper's lips, by way of consolation. Without much apparent difficulty the mixture was sipped—some would describe the diminution in the glass as occasioned by something more than a sip—and the object of the President's attention and kindness became calm and greatly refreshed.

"There!" exclaimed Mr. Wirkem, much

pleased at the alteration ; “ you’re all right. We shall have no more weeping, I know.”

“ I did n’t weep, sir, at my *wounds*,” replied Melancholy Joey, sounding the vowels particularly hard, and glancing at his disarranged garments, “ but at my soiled and *only* tog-gery.”

“ I’ll give ye a rub down, to take the worst off,” added John Hogg, suiting the action to the words, by commencing a vigorous dusting of his friend’s garments ; and smearing, rather than cleaning, his countenance with the moistened end of a handkerchief, long since worn out. “ Really,” continued he, applying the substitute for a towel in the same manner that nurses may be seen to extract minute particles of dust from the eyes of their infantine charges, when the necessary apparatus for a more extended ablution is wanting—“ really,” and one-eyed Jack again paused to damp the antique remains with his tongue, “ you’ll come out quite bright, Joey,” continued he.

"I begin to feel more myself again," observed Mr. Wyper, submitting to the ordeal of cleansing with the resignation of a martyr.

During this ceremony the ex-postboy took his way to a neighbouring pump, in the stable-yard, and quickly expunged all remains of the soot upon his countenance.

Upon his return, Mr. Wirkem conducted him to Melancholy Joey, and, prefacing his request for sealing the settlement of the affair of honour by shaking hands, in the remark that "both had conducted themselves nobly," desired them to become on the instant constant and eternal friends.

"I've no objections, sir," observed Mr. Wyper, offering his digits to his successful opponent, "and consequently there's my fist on it."

"And mine, with all my heart," added Toddy, giving the proffered hand a punishing squeeze.

"Now that affair's settled," said Mr.

Wirkem, "we'll just have the stirrup-cup and parting-glass. So fill to the brim, my hearts of oak."

The *spirit-stirring* mandate was answered readily. Each goblet was charged to the lip, and John Hogg's a little over.

"We'll have the toast or sentiment from you, Dick," observed Bill Johnson.

"Are ye all ready?" inquired the President.

"Full inside and out, Mr. Wirkem, sir," replied John, looking at his full glass with lively satisfaction.

"Then here's to the daughters of Fortune," returned the President, "with one exception, and that's the eldest."

The toast was drunk, and, when Mr. Wirkem had drained his goblet, he hummed—

"Let the toast pass—drink to the lass,
I know she will prove an excuse for the glass."

The old coachman might, perchance, have

continued the song, had he not been interrupted by one-eyed Jack asking, after a thoughtful pause, "why the eldest young lady was omitted from the compliment?"

"Because," replied the President, "we should be toasting *Miss Fortune*."

"Bra-vo!" shouted Tom Short. "Dick always gives us something good and spicy."

The night had been the longest, and by no means the saddest, since the establishment of "THE CHALKED-OFF COACHMAN'S FREE AND EASY." The President's ear had been deaf to the summons of Time, and not one in the merry company seemed disposed to rectify his negligence.

At length, however, he dragged with mingled reluctance and difficulty his capacious watch from its poke, and, looking at the dial, screwed up his lips and elevated his eyebrows.

"On my word, gentlemen," said he, "I'm ashamed to say, we're much, very much over

our time—the worst error that a dragsman can commit. So let us say ‘ Good night,’ at once ; and ‘ stand not on the order of our going—but go.’ ”

CHAPTER XV.

THE LAST NIGHT.

The members are again assembled at the festive board. A general silence prevails. Mr. Wirkem is clearing his throat from fumes, cobwebs, and obstructions of all kinds, and seems getting ready for some vocal attempt. At length, he is prepared, and, putting himself "in form," he commences the following hearty, old song :—

" Say, what is wealth without delight?
'Tis dross, 'tis dirt, 'tis useless quite;
Better be poor, and taste of joy,
Than thus your wasted time employ.

Then let an humble son of song
Repeat those pleasures most divine ;
The joys that life's best hours prolong
Are those of hunting, love, and wine.

For hunting gives us jocund health,
We envy not the miser's wealth,
But chase the fox or timid hare,
And know delight he cannot share.
Then home at eve we cheerly go,
Whilst round our brightest comforts shine ;
With joy shut in, we shut out woe,
And sing of hunting, love, and wine.

Mild love attunes the soul to peace,
And bids the toiling sportsman cease ;
This softens passion's luring powers,
With bliss ecstatic wings the hours.
It soothes the mind to sweetest rest,
Or savage thoughts might then entwine ;
Thus he alone is truly blest,
Whose joys are hunting, love, and wine.

'Tis wine exhilarates the heart,
When sinking under sorrow's smart ;
'Tis that can ease the wretch's woe,
And heighten every bliss we know.

But wine's abuse makes man a beast—
Be all with moderation mine ;
Life will appear an endless feast,
While blest with hunting, love, and wine."

" And famous blessings too, Dick Wirkem," observed the Vice-President. " I agree with the late Mrs. Toddy's opinion," continued he, " respecting joys hereafter. A great many will be disappointed when they come to taste 'em."

" Ah ! " exclaimed one-eyed Jack, taking a long pull at his glass — so long that it interrupted the course of respiration for a considerable period, " I love present comforts. A batch o' promises is all very well ; but not half so relishing as tit-bits in hand."

" We mustn't get upon religious subjects," said Mr. Wirkem, expostulatively ; " leave those to gentlemen in black shorts and white cravats."

" What, parsons, eh, Dick ? " observed Peter Bivin. " I wonder what's the reason of their

always dressing in sables," continued he. "One would think religion was always in mourning."

"You'll find," returned the President, sagely, "all trades and occupations, of whatever kind, require their professors and artificers to adopt peculiar attire. Thus we find sailors in very capacious trousers, no braces, short jackets, and little straw hats. Ostlers find long waistcoats, drab shorts, and showy chokers loosely tied, a convenient costume. Lawyers mount wigs and gowns, to look grave and learned. Beggars put on rags and tatters, to win sympathy and charity from the benevolent. Young women poke flowers here, bits of muslin there, and wear short petticoats, to show their ankles and captivate men's hearts. Farmers stump along in iron-tipped boots, to get over clods and other rough ground. Dancing-masters skip through life in thin pumps and stocking-tights. Jockeys ride in doe-skin breeches, silk and satin colours. And

so might we go on tracing the why and the wherefore through each grade and stratum of the community. But the immediate and direct cause of parsons, doctors, and undertakers wearing the sombre shades of the crow and jackdaw is, without doubt, the having frequently to attend ceremonies and performances where black is indispensable, and therefore the *handiness* of the colour makes it universal with them."

"What a chaunter he is!" remarked John Hogg, enthusiastically.

"That's the cause, I'll be sworn, Dick," returned Peter Bivin.

"He might have said what postboys wear top-boots and white cords for," whispered Toddy to one-eyed Jack. "We deserve to be thought on," continued he, jealous of the reference to ostlers.

"*Boys* isn't to be counted *men*," replied Jack, checking the ambition of his companion.

"To be sure they an't," chimed in Melan-

choly Joey, glad of an opportunity to wreak the dregs of some remaining spleen upon his late opponent.

The ex-postboy turned sharply towards where Mr. Wyper was sitting, and regarded him with a fixed and angry look.

"I'll thank you ——"

"Stop, stop," interrupted the President, witnessing the outbreak of the smouldering embers of the old quarrel; "we'll have no renewal of hostilities, and nothing resembling them. I thought differences were forgotten and forgiven."

"And so they are, Mr. Wirkem, sir," replied John Hogg. "Oh, dear, yes: If Toddy had a wipe on one cheek he'd offer his t'other for another."

"No, I wouldn't," rejoined the ex-postboy, in a truly positive tone.

"Then you an't the apostle I took ye for," returned Jack.

"An't what?" inquired Toddy.

"The apostle," replied John Hogg, with emphasis.

"Nor don't want to be," rejoined his friend, gloomily.

"No, no, no," said Mr. Wirkem, in a soothing, amicable voice, "of course not. The apostles were not gentlemen of the modern school, and held very different sentiments to those of Mr. Toddy. In short, they cannot refer to him in any way."

This satisfied the ex-postboy, who looked triumphantly at John Hogg, and said chucklingly—

"Who's the apostle now, old feller?"

"I think," remarked the President, "that the call's with me; and as we haven't had a whistle from Tom Short lately, I shall pick that straw out o' the truss."

"As you please so it must be, Dick," replied the willing Tom Short; and, after a few seconds to overhaul the locker of his memory, he added, "I'll give you a short tale, founded

on facts, which took place when I was dragsman to the Portsmouth Telegraph."

"Short or long, we shall be glad to hear it," rejoined Mr. Wirkem.

And with this encouragement, Tom Short thus began.

The coast between Hampshire and the Isle of Wight affords those hardy individuals who supply our markets with wild ducks ample opportunities for their dangerous and too often unprofitable occupation. At ebb-tide, vast muddy flats, covered with green weed, are the resorts of immense flocks of sea-fowl, who come to graze in all their multitudes upon the savannahs of the shore; and in the dark, cold, cheerless winter night, he who in summer plies the overflowed shores with the line and net, runs up in his boat among the little creeks, which the tide leaves in the mudlands, and tries to steal upon his wary prey.

Within a short distance of one of these

extensive flats an old man lived, who had acquired the title of "Jemmy Ducks," from his singular passion for the pursuit of wild-fowl. The night could never be too cold, dark, or stormy for him, so long as there was a chance of success. When others, who had not seen half the winter snows that he had, peeped from their partly-opened cottage doors, and, feeling the briny spray drifted like stinging shot upon the keen blast, crept back to the cheerful hearth again, glowing with the blazing faggot, Jemmy Ducks would swing his long, rusty gun over his shoulder, and sally forth with as much pleasure as a gay-winged butterfly in the young summer's sun.

It was a black night in the depth of December; a cold north-east wind swept over the ooze, crisping with the frost, and a thick snow was scudding before the gale. The old man rose from dozing in his wooden chair, and, after a yawn, commenced preparations

for the night's sport. From a nail he detached a red cotton cap, which he pulled with scrupulous care over his ears; a hat, of the shape of a coalheaver's, denominated "a sou'-wester," surmounted that; a thick pilot-jacket, so patched that very little of the original was visible, was buttoned from the waist to the chin; huge jack-boots were drawn to his thighs; and a thick woollen shawl, twisted several times round his throat till it reached the tip of his nose, completed the defensives against the weather. His powder-flask, composed of a bullock's horn and a cork, he slung over a shoulder; and a canvass bag, containing the shot, he crammed into a convenient side-pocket.

"There," said he, taking two guns from a corner of the room, "I think we shall cripple 'em to-night."

Minutely he examined the flints; and, after chipping both of them with the back of his

sheath-knife, he tried their qualities by flashing a little powder in the pan.

“Now, old blazer,” said he, addressing his old mute companion and favourite gun, “we’ll have a drop of comfort, and then ‘sharp’s’ the word.”

Buckling the half of a sack under one arm, which had held many a mallard and many a flask of smuggled brandy, and throwing both of the guns over his dexter shoulder, Jemmy tossed off a glass of liquid fire, and issued from his dwelling.

Not a star peeped through the scowling clouds—above, below, around, all was impenetrable darkness. Now, with a roar, the angry blast rushed over land and sea; then, with a moan, it lulled in its course, and dwindled gently down into a murmuring sigh; but scarcely had it paused to rest, when the boatswain of the storm piped his shrill call, and on came the gale again, shrieking and scattering destruction in its course.

“The tide’s ebbing fast,” observed the fowler, getting into his boat, which was moored in a creek, “and I think this wind will sink with it.”

As he slowly pulled up the creek, he stopped now and then during the lulls, and listened attentively for the sonorous flight; but nothing fell upon his ear but the splash of the frothing wave as it lashed the shore. Arriving, at length, at a convenient spot for his purpose, the fowler drove a pole into the mud, and, mooring his boat to it, waited patiently for the coming of the birds. Carefully he wrapped a piece of sailcloth round the locks of his guns, to secure them from damp, and placing them by his side so as to be ready at a moment’s notice, Jemmy Ducks personified “Patience in a punt.”

Hour after hour rolled by; but there sat the fowler, with pricked ears, like a wiry terrier at a rat-hole. The storm had now abated; occasionally, in fitful gusts, the wind went

and came, but each succeeding gust was of decreasing force. Large and thick flakes of snow fell in a dense cloud to the earth, and when the surface of the mud-lands was covered with it, the darkness became less intense. A pale, glimmering star peered occasionally from between the masses of scudding clouds ; and, although not the faintest streak of morning dawn was perceptible, yet the increased searching cold announced the approach of the break of day.

During his long, solitary watch, the fowler not unfrequently consoled his inward man with drams from a pocket-flask ; the quid, too, of the fragrant weed was turned and turned again, and, at length, a fresh lump was extracted from a capacious tin box, to supply the exhausted one. Scarcely had he settled it in the well-experienced jaw, when a whirring noise caught his ear. On, on came the airy sounds. Hope thrilled through the anxious watcher's breast. He knew full

well the cause. A cloud of sea-fowl flapped within forty yards to leeward of him, and, with a wheel, settled upon the ooze. No sooner were they upon the mud, than but slight symptoms of their whereabouts remained. Like a creeping cat, the fowler untied the sailcloth from the locks, and primed the pans. Placing the shortest of the two guns by his side, he brought the other stealthily to his shoulder. A flash—a roar—and down he threw the piece; then, snatching up the remaining one, he pulled the ready trigger at the confused multitude, as they rose on the wings of fear, scared from their nocturnal meal.

It was but the work of a minute for Jemmy to fix on his mud-pattens. Over the side of the boat he went to gather in his spoil, if Fortune had favoured his shot in the dark. Groping along the ooze, the fowler felt for his booty, and, upon arriving at the spot where the flock was feeding, had the satisfac-

tion of finding many stricken to the ground. One by one was gathered in, until the bag swelled with its contents.

“ I can find no more of 'em,” soliloquized Jemmy, “ so here goes.”

As he was retracing his steps, he heard the flap of a winged duck limping along the mud. The fowler, being desirous of not losing his victim, hastened in the direction of the sound. Now he neared it; but, just as his fingers were extended to grasp the fugitive, away it shuffled, and eluded the clutch. Like a hat bowling before the wind, the duck permitted Jemmy's hand to almost fasten upon him, but never to obtain a fixed hold. Once his fingers even touched the neck; still another and another shuffle disappointed the fowler. The longer the chase lasted, the more determined was Jemmy to bag the duck. Perseverance backed the enterprise. “ Quack! quack!” screamed the duck, leading his pursuer in the right direction; and so long as he could

discover this, the fowler was decided to pursue.

Jemmy Ducks, beware! "Time and tide wait for no man." This sage motto, alas! escaped the memory of the fowler. Intent only on his game, he suddenly found that the water, which had been accelerated by some peculiar circumstance affecting the tide, had made an alarming progress around him, and he discovered that he was completely encircled by it. Swim he could not; and certain death appeared inevitable: for such was the distance from any human habitation, that no cry of distress could be heard, neither could any signal be seen, from the prevailing darkness.

"Oh, Lor'!" groaned Jemmy, "I'm food for fish! Have mercy upon a miserable sinner!" and then he began to number those things which he *ought* to have done, and the countless things he ought *not* to have done. "I wonder whether running a bit of contra-

band is a *real* sin!" whimpered the disconsolate Jemmy — "if so," and here he added a heartrending groan, "it's a certainty, and no mistake, there'll be no place aloft for me."

With this very unpleasant reflection, the fowler selected the highest part of the flat yet uncovered by the water, and waited the decree of fate. On rolled the splashing wave. Nearer and nearer it came, till it dashed against his feet. Up — up it crept. His knees were buried. Stretching down a hand, he felt the element within a few inches of the tops of his boots. Every few seconds he had to draw his fingers farther up. Did a few drops fall over the tops? Yes, through the coarse woollen hose the cold water trickled down his legs.

"Oh, dear me!" moaned Jemmy; "it's all over with me!"

At this moment a flock of sea-fowl whirled over his head, and he thought they might be

the spirits of those he had hastened from this sublunary planet, come to revel in his misery ; for Jemmy was of the superstitious order.

However, hope was still the fowler's buoy. Although the water had now reached the first button of his jacket, he yet had a lingering confidence it would not reach the second. But scarcely had this flattering shadow flitted in his brain, when the finger, pressed upon the button, announced its dissipation. Slowly, but surely, the waves rose higher and higher. Button after button became covered, until the last one remained. What can describe poor Jemmy's agony as he felt even this disappear ? He tried to think of a form of prayer ; but being " of the earth, earthy," his theological acquirements were so limited, that not one could he hammer from his memory. At length he ejaculated—

" Lord, have mercy upon a miserable smuggler !" and, as he concluded the brief appeal, the water reached even to his chin. He

strained his neck upwards. "Let me live while I may," was his motto. Now his feet appeared inclined to float. With much difficulty he prevented their breaking from their anchorage; and, had it not been for the weight of the bagged ducks, shot, and other things about him, Jemmy's toes would have no longer remained under the waves.

With outstretched neck, like a grateful fowl returning thanks for his limpid draught, Jemmy saw the first pale streak of light tinging the east. The glorious sun was peeping from his curtain.

"I never shall see him set again," thought the unhappy fowler, while two large salt tears rose, to fall and mingle with the water splashing at his chin.

As each wave rolled towards him, he anticipated it would reach his lips. Many came, and murmured past; but not one rose so high. At length he bent his chin a little down, and thought he saw the uppermost button of his

coat begin to appear ; but the fluctuation of the water was such, and the turn of the tide so slow, that it was yet some time before he dare venture to assure himself that the button was fairly above the level of the flood.

No starving mariner, floating on a wreck, could behold approaching succour with greater transport than did Jemmy, when convinced that the tide was ebbing. A second button appeared. Jemmy felt lighter than the thin air. His spirits rose as the water fell ; and, although his situation, for some five hours longer, was anything but an enviable one, he has often since declared, he never felt happier than when watching the ebb of this tide.

“ And I don’t wonder at it,” remarked Bill Johnson. “ Upon my life, it was a very near touch.”

“ About the nearest shave I ever heard of,” added Jacob Plywel.

“ No matter how close,” said Mr. Wirkem,

"we get to the post, so long as we just clear it. For my part," continued he, "I'm rather fond of putting the wheels within touch and go; it shows nice driving."

"But a little swerve, Dick," replied the Vice-president, "may give us an awful smash."

"Very true," rejoined Mr. Wirkem, "and as a general rule I think it better to give plenty of room. Caution and discretion make the best whips for all sorts of roads, and come in fresher at the finish," added he.

"Put that in your pipe," said one-eyed Jack to Mr. Wyper, "and smoke it gently. Such sentiments as them deserve tender puffin."

"I prefer *backer*," returned Melancholy Joey, ramming the bowl of his pipe full of the sweet narcotic.

"'If ignorance is bliss,' " quoted John Hogg, looking sorrowfully at his friend, and shaking his head like a beech leaf in the zephyr's breath, "how blessed happy *you* ought to be!"

Mr. Wirkem was especially tickled at this remark, and enjoyed a long convulsion of internal merriment.

“By the way, Dick,” said the Vice-president, “have you heard anything of this new flying coach ; the Aërial Machine, it’s called?”

“Oh yes,” replied Mr. Wirkem ; “and when it starts,” continued he, satirically, “I’m to be dragsman, and John Hogg the cad.”

As soon as this observation escaped the lips of the President, Melancholy Joey turned his eyes quickly upon his friend, and said, “What, have ye got a new sitivation, John?”

“In course I have,” replied Jack.

“On what road?” inquired Mr. Wyper.

John Hogg pointed upwards, and after a pause productive of great dramatic effect, said, “The one to heaven, where there’s no need o’ direction-posts.”

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The *Sulphur* was commissioned in September, 1835, by Captain Beechey, and accompanied by her consort, the *Starling*, Lieutenant-Commander Kellett, quitted England in the following December. He invalided at Valparaiso, and was succeeded by Acting Commander Kellett, who was again superseded by the author who took the command at Panama, in February, 1837, having crossed the Isthmus of Darien for that purpose, and retained it till the conclusion of her protracted voyage. After some little delay in completing certain necessary operations, the *Sulphur* proceeded northerly, touching at Realejo and Libertad in Central America, and reached San Blas in June, whence she sailed for the Sandwich Islands, which she reached the following month.

Port-Etches, in King William's Sound, in 60° 30' N., was their next destination. Point Riou and Port Mulgrave were chosen as base stations for determining the position of Mount St. Elias, and further settling the question of longitude between Cook and Vancouver. The ship then proceeded to Sitka, or New Archangel, in

[VOYAGE ROUND THE WORLD.]

Norfolk Sound, where the officers received very courteous treatment from Captain Koupreanoff, the Russian governor. She next visited Friendly Cove, in Nootka Sound, and thence sailed to San Francisco, when the examination of the River Sacramento, 156 miles from her anchorage, occupied them in open boats for thirty-one days. Thence she successively visited Monterey, San Blas, Acapulco, and Libertad, on her way to Realejo, where the author, for the recovery of his health, undertook a land-survey of the principal mountains over-looking his future ground in the Gulf of Papagayo, and fixed the principal features of the Lake of Managua to its first fall into that of Nicaragua at Tepfitapa. After surveying the Gulf of Papagayo and Port Culebra, the Sulphur quitted Central America, touched at, and fixed the Cocos, and reached Callao in June, 1838, for the purpose of refit, and the completion of stores and provisions. Having examined the coast between Cerro Azul and Callao (about sixty miles), she left Callao in August, calling at Paita and Guayaquil, and returned to Panama in the following October.

Here may be said to have ended her first cruise; but between October and March a survey was made of the Gulfs of Fonseca and Nicoya, Pueblo Nueva, and Baia Honda, after which the ship moved northerly, repeating her cruise of 1837. She was detained at the Columbia River till September; Bodega, the Russian position near San Francisco, was then surveyed, and subsequently San Francisco, Monterey, Santa Barbara, San Pedro, San Juan, San Diego, San Quentin, San Bartolome, the Gulf of Magdalena, and Cape San Lucas. The Sulphur then proceeded to San Blas and Mazatlan, where orders for a westerly return awaited her. Having shipped supplies for fourteen months from a transport which had been sent to meet her, she commenced her homeward voyage in January, 1840: the author landed on the islands of Socorro and Clarion, and secured their positions. She reached the Marquesas the same month, and after a short visit to Port Anna Maria, Nuhuhiva, moved on to Bow Island, where the operation was performed of boring for the volcanic foundation on which these coral islands are suspected to stand. She then visited Tahiti, Huaheine, Raratonga, Vavao (Tonga Group), Nukulau (Feejees), Tanna (New Hebrides), Port Carteret (New Ireland), Britannia Island, New Guinea, coasting that island to Arimoa and as far as Jobie, where she remained to rate and survey, then to Amsterdam, Pigeon Island (Dampier's Straits), Bouro, and Amboina, moving thence to Macassar, Great Solombo, and Pulo Kumpal, off the Borneo coast, and reached Singapore in October of the same year.

Orders here awaited her to proceed instantly to China, where she was detained, and took an active part in the warlike operations against the Chinese, till nearly the close of the year 1841, when she sailed for England. After leaving Singapore, touching at Malacca, Penang, Achen, (Sumatra,) Point de Galle (Ceylon), Seychelles, Madagascar, Cape of Good Hope, St. Helena, and Ascension, she at last returned to Spithead.

It will readily be acknowledged, from a perusal of the foregoing statement, that such an immense field of observation has seldom been presented to the reader: and for so large a portion of it—Central America—it can scarcely be equalled in attraction.

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